THE GRAPPLING HANDS OF SPIRITUAL FORCES

IN OLD ENGLISH POETRY

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INTRODUCTION

The hand, with its long fingers, thumb and sturdy palm, is often considered the most distinctive physical feature of humanity, capable, at one extreme, of fine and delicate actions and gentleness and, at the other extreme, of swift, fierce motions and cruelty. Thus it is a concrete representation of the opposing potentialities of the human mind and spirit which direct its movements. This physical manifesting of the spiritual corresponds to the basic idea of sacramental theology: the church, which recorded and developed Old English literature, taught that the visible and tangible is a sign or sacrament of invisible realities.[1] In Old English poetry, an investigation of the appearances of the word "hand" shows that it functions in precisely this way, as a sign of the invisible forces which the Anglo-Saxon Christian perceived behind the phenomena of events. There is no neutrality: these forces align themselves with either good or evil. On the side of good, there is the hand of God, and the hands of obedient angels and men who attempt to do right. On the other side of the scale, there is the hand of Satan, and the hands of devils and men who act destructively and wrestle with the powers of good. The grappling may be on the level of actual battle or on the level of conflicting wills, since sometimes the hand signals an act which is intended but not performed. Tracing the image of the hand therefore

can be an interesting way of illuminating the underlying doctrinal structures in Old English poetry.

In Modern English there is only the one accepted term for hand, laying aside the facetious slang words like "mitt", and it is very difficult even to find circumlocutions, but in Old English the variety of synonyms designating the five-fingered appendage furnishes evidence of its importance as a concrete symbol. The Anglo-Saxon poet had several words at his disposal,[2] as well as metaphors. Primarily he used the basic "hand", sometimes spelled hond, which Bosworth-Toller[3] translates "HAND, side, power, control [cf. mund]; used also of the person from whom an action proceeds". For mund the same dictionary gives "hand" as the primary meaning; further meanings derive from the functions of the hand as a measuring device and as an instrument of defence. "Protection", given as a third meaning for mund, has the related sense of "to be in a person's hands" [B-T, p.700]. The link between the hand, power and protection in the dictionary definition suggests the hand's function in poetry. The meanings that the word hand develops are inherent in its uses in real life and never depart completely from the concrete physical basis.

Some words describe the parts of the hand, each of which may imply a different quality of action. One such word is "folm" which means manus or palma [Grein Dictionary][4] and is cognate with our modern word "palm", a learned derivative from the Latin into which the Old French form was assimilated [O.E.D.].[5] Common usage in Old English does not normally distinguish the palm from the whole hand; however, there

are some instances in which the more limited meaning adds to the effectiveness of the lines. One of these is in the Christ poem, lines 1123-4, where the poet uses three different hand-words in quick succession: hondum, folmum, and fystum. Thus the men who are abusing Christ strike him with their hands, palms and fists, suggesting by the various kinds of blows a wide range of emotions: a cuff of anger, a slap of despite, a punch of hatred - actions that even without an exegetical commentary suggest sins of those who reject Christ. More often in O.E. poetry the word folm has a negative connotation, as demonstrated by the compounds formed from this word. Two are very specific: beadufolm, war or battle hand (bellica manus), is a word applied to Grendel, and often translated "claw" or "fist"[6] rather than the more human and innocuous "hand"; manfolm means evil-doer or, literally, "wicked hand" since it is with his hands that an evil being acts. Occasionally, however, this word has a creative connotation, as in Psalm 94:5 where God is said to have made the dry land with his folmum; possibly the requirements of the alliteration have a great deal to do with the usage here. Two other words with a limited meaning, finger and fyst, appear rarely. In these two cases, unlike the case of folm, the specific meaning is more important and these words cannot be subsumed under the general sense of "hand"; nevertheless, they still have significance in the overall picture, since the fingers are part of the hand, and the fist is one position that it may take.

Many Old English compounds containing the word "hand" suggest a special function or characteristic of the hand being referred to. Of

these, handgeweorc has great significance especially in Anglo-S biblical poetry. It means an object wrought by hand, the work of the craftsman who uses his hands to make tools, weapons, objects of beauty. Another such compound is mundcræft, the power of the hand or the power to protect, which implies the role of a warrior, defender of his people. The word mundgripe - "handgrip" - contains two hand-words (see gripe, below) and most specifically emphasizes that it is the hand which is doing the gripping and holding. Another compound, mundrof — strenuus manibus — describes strength or fierceness in the hand, a quality prized in warfare. These compounds effectively represent different kinds of manual action and also the emotional or moral value of these actions.

Some other words which do not actually mean "hand" but which either are metaphorically related to or describe the action or function of a hand will also be included in this study. One such word, the adjective swiðre, does not fit in this classification, however. It means "stronger" or "right" and sometimes stands by itself without the word "hand". Other words indicate the peculiar ability of the human hand to grasp: feng, which Holthausen translates as "griff" (grip)[7] and Grein as "amplexus" (embrace with arms or hands); and gripe which means "grip" or "grasp" or "manipulus" (Grein, a small bundle or handful). The related verbs - gegrapian, gripan and forgripan - describe the most characteristic action of the hand, the thumb and fingers closing upon an object, weapon or victim. These verbs and nouns are sometimes significant in the pattern of meaning established by the references to hands and help in determining the meaning of a hand-action in any given context. Likewise the metaphorical clomm, for which the common meaning is

"fetter", also suggests vividly the clutching and holding power of the hand. Thus this study embraces a broad linguistic spectrum as well as a cross-section of the literature; included are the translation of scripture into verse, a saga of salvation based on Genesis, and the great "secular" poem Beowulf, with references to other works where significant.

The scope of this study is strictly delimited: it was necessary to leave out a number of aspects of the problems raised. This was particularly true in the case of the Psalter, where difficulties in interpretation are compounded by the need to check the Latin sources and commentaries. The version of the Psalms used was the Vulgate, although the Latin text which the Anglo-Saxon versifier had before him was a different and earlier version of doubtful accuracy.[8] Possibly, if the Latin text the poet used were known, some of the omissions, additions and errors in the O.E. Psalter as compared with the Vulgate would be explained, making some of the explanations offered here unnecessary. Similarly in the case of the Genesis poem, a number of problems have been left unsolved and even untreated; only what seemed relevant to the meaning of the hand motif has been discussed. For a fuller appreciation of this poem the approach used here would have to be co-ordinated with studies of contemporaneous commentaries,[9] of Anglo-Saxon culture and of the monastic context in which the poem was preserved. The manuscript illustrations are also worth more study since they are evidence in Genesis of the traditional understanding that grew up around the first book of the Pentateuch, although they

belong to a later period and sometimes reflect "different points of view with reference to the matter and text of the Bible . . .".[10]

These drawings are discussed in Appendix A, to which the reader is referred whenever, during the course of the thesis, they provide an interesting illumination of the poem; no assertion regarding the original author's intended meaning is based on them. The first and second chapters, taken together, may most profitably be read as a full preparation for the third. The studies both of the Psalms and of Beowulf are based on the principle of searching out and organizing all the possible categories of hand action. The Beowulf chapter expands on the hand of the warrior topic and develops the hand of the artisan category which was barely present in the Psalter, wherein a very broad range of other categories occurs. With all of these as a foundation, the Genesis chapter is erected along thematic lines instead, utilising the concepts previously established but subordinating them to the role which the present author suggests that they could have in the interpretation and enjoyment of Old English poetry.

NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

1. Jean Daniélou, The Bible and the Liturgy (Notre Dame, 1961), p.241.

2. While the oral formulaic theory has helped to show how highly conventional O.E. poetry is, it can be misused by reductionists who belittle the content of the poem in suggesting that the word-choice is dictated "only" by stock formulae. While alliteration is an important consideration, sound alone does not determine sense. The best poetry is, of course, a felicitous combination of sound and meaning. In the selection of words and phrases meaning is at least an equal requirement, and semantic differences do come into play as well as the alliterative function in the line, even in the case of a simple word like "hand".

3. Joseph Bosworth and T. Northcote Toller, An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary (Oxford, 1898; reprinted 1954).

4. Christian Wilhelm Michael Grein, Sprachschatz de angelsächsishen Dichter (Heidelberg, 1912).

5. James A. H. Murray, Henry Bradley, W. A. Craigie, C. T. Onions, eds., The Oxford English Dictionary (Oxford, 1933).

6. For example, by R. K. Gordon, trans., Anglo-Saxon Poetry (London, 1967), p.21.

7. F. Holthausen, Altengliches etymologisches Worterbuch (Heidelberg, 1934).

8. Kenneth and Celia Sisam, "The Psalm Texts" in The Paris Psalter, edited by Bertram Colgrave, from the series Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile, Vol.VIII (Copenhagen, 1958) p.15.

9. As attempted in the work of Bernard Huppé, Doctrine and Poetry (New York, 1959).

10. Sir Israel Gollancz, The Cædmon Manuscript of Anglo-Saxon Biblical Poetry (Oxford, 1927), p. xxxiv.

THE FENG OF GOD

> And God came from Teman... And his brightness was as the light; he had horns coming out of his hand: and there was the hiding of his power.
>
> (Habakkuk 3:3-4)

The metrical translation of the Psalter represents the blending of the Biblical and Anglo-Saxon traditions. Unfortunately, the first fifty psalms are preserved complete only in a prose version; therefore, only the last hundred Psalms will be examined in this investigation of the use of the hand in Old English poetry. The types of reference to hands will be classified in terms of three general categories according to the possessor of the hand, these categories to be subdivided according to function. Where significant, it will be noted whether the particular instance is peculiarly Hebraic or Anglo-Saxon, especially when the O.E. poet-translator has omitted, inserted, or otherwise altered a reference to hands.

Every mention of the hand in the psalms falls into one or the other of two major classes: the hand of man or the hand of God. According to the division made in the Hebrew theology of the psalmist, the hand of man category may properly be split into two distinct groupings according to the moral character of the possessor; that is, wicked men and righteous men, thus making three classes altogether.

The former of these is limited simply to human beings if the psalms are read literally; but, keeping in mind the fact that to the Christian translator the Hebrew Bible is charged with Christological and spiritual significance, then the latter, the hands of wicked men, can also represent the demonic powers. These beings, on the bottom of the so-called three-tiered universe descending from heaven through middle-dwelling (earth) to hell, may then be regarded as having hands in the psalms also, and as using them in a struggle with God for possession of the souls of the righteous.

A couple of references will establish the nature of the hands of the wicked as including both the human and the demonic dimension. One of these cases is also noteworthy for being an insertion by the O.E. versifier; it is not found in the Vulgate. In Psalm 68,[1] which is an appeal to God to save the good man who has been shamed and to destroy his adversaries, the poet says:

> Ofer me syndon þa þe me ehton,
> fæstum folmum forð gestrangad
> feondas mine, ac ic forð agef
> unrihtlice þa þe ic ne reafude ær.
>
> (Ps 68:5)

> More than me are those who persecuted me, my enemies continually prevailed with heavy hands, and I thereafter unrightfully gave back that which I had not taken formerly.

The Latin text reads: confortati sunt qui persecuti sunt me, Inimici me iniuste . . .,[2] omitting the word hand; the Anglo-Saxon seems here inevitably to think of the immediacy of battle and hand-to-hand combat when he thinks of enemies. Similarly, he delightedly renders the

manus gladii of Psalm 62:9 by sweordes hand. This weapon image, with the sword itself having hands that attack and destroy almost removes the sword from the realm of human control altogether. In this particular instance, however, this is appropriate. The sword becomes disembodied retributive justice; the wicked make necessary the destruction which is called down upon them. Those that seek my soul to destroy it, says the psalmist, shall fall by the sword: they shall be a portion for foxes (A.V., Ps 63:10). The Christian reading these psalms would understand by enemies of his soul both physical and spiritual foes; the demons who attempt to destroy his faith shall fall by the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (cf. Eph. 6:17), as the corporeal enemy falls in battle by the sword of steel. Evil never stands as a fact by itself, but the hands of the wicked are always attempting to harm the innocent and always being overcome in accordance with divine justice.

The basic image of evil involves the hands of the evil making the good or innocent captive. To be in the clutch of the foe seems to be the ultimate fate to be feared, corresponding to the Anglo-Saxon's abhorrence as warrior for being conquered, and as Christian for falling into Satan's grip. The best example may be found in Psalm 105, in which both a compound and a single-word reference to hands occur in successive verses. The most interesting fact here is that it is not the power or the initiative of the wicked which makes captive the righteous, but God who permits them to be overtaken in accordance with His own purposes:

He hi on handgeweald hæðenum sealde
and heora weoldan, þa him wyrrest ær
on feondscipe fæste gestodon.
Heora costedan cuþe feondas
and under handum hynþe þoledan;
hi alysde oft lifes ealdor.

(Ps 105:30-31)

He gave them into the power of the hands of the heathen and they ruled them, who earlier stood fast in the worst hatred for them. Well-known foes tried them and they suffered humiliation under their hand; the prince of life often freed them.

The hands of the enemy appear as an evil to the victim, but an evil justly deserved for the victim's disobedience to God, and hence as de facto instruments of the righteousness of God. God is the one who ahofe 'lifted up' (Ps 88:36) the hands of the enemy, temporarily, so that He could remind His people that it was His power and not their own which sustained them. The Old English poet translates the second part of this verse as gebrohtest his feondas fæcne on blisse. The insertion of this little word fæcne, which has no equivalent in the Vulgate or later English versions, could be an underlining of the fact of God's overruling power. The principal meaning of fæcne is deceitful, treacherous, or worthless and in this sentence it is an adjective modifying blisse: [God] 'brought his enemies into an illusory happiness'. This kind of embellishment, even apart from the general setting of the psalms, makes it clear that the God who gesealde his fæger folc on feondes hand 'gave [His] fair people into the enemy's hand' (Ps 77:61) is also able to recover them thence. The hands of the wicked who had the "worst hatred" for God's people thus represent malicious intention, but not power; for God hands His people over and rescues them when He has accomplished

His purpose of humbling them, thus bringing good out of evil.

Because God is known to work in this way, the psalms contain prayers for deliverance from foes when the speaker finds himself or his nation in difficult straits. Here again, in Psalm 70, the stress is on God rather than on the evil situation, and significantly the Anglo-Saxon poet has dropped one mention of "hand" from the following verse:

> Forþon þu me, god, wære geara trymmend,
> freoða fultumiend; alys me feondum nu,
> and me of folmum afere firenwyrcendra,
> þe þine æ efnan nellaþ. . . .
>
> (Ps 70:3)
>
> Because thou wert formerly (my) supporter,
> protector, helper; free me now from enemies,
> and bring me out of hands of crime-workers who
> will not carry out thy law . . . .

The translator of this verse ignored the Hebrew parallelism[3] of "Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked, out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man"(A.V., Ps 71:4) and thereby seems to turn the focus from the victorious grasp of the foe to the support and protection of God which has been given before and will be again. The most peculiar alteration by the A.S. poet occurs in his rendering of the Vulgate's Eripe me et erue me de manu filiorum alienorum quorum os locutem est vanitatem, dextera eorum dextera iniquitatis (Ps 144:11), on the analogy of an earlier verse of the same psalm: Emitte manum tuam de alto! eripe me et libera me de aquis multis, de manu filiorum alienorum . . .(Ps 145:7). Our poet inserts this reference to waters in the later verse, transporting it there from the earlier one in which he also elaborates on "hand". In sequence, the two verses read:

Onsend þine handa of heanessum,[4]
alys me and genere wiðˇ lagustreamum
manegum wæterum and wiðˇ manfolmum
fremdra bearna and frecenra.

(Ps 143:8)

Send thy hand from the heights;
loose and save me from the sea-currents,
many waters and from the evil-doers,
children of foreigners and terrible foes.

Alys me and oþlæd laþum wætrum,
manegum merestreamum, mærum handum,
þa me fremde bearn fæcne syndan.

(Ps 143:12)

Free me and lead me out from hateful waters,
from great sea-streams, from great hands,[5]
when sons of aliens are deceitful to me.

In so doing, the poet almost seems to equate the hands of the 'sons of aliens' - the evil-doers with wicked folmum - with the clutch of many currents, the hostile water, like the terrible grip of the flood in the Junius manuscript paraphrases.[6] This extends the notion of evil hands beyond the mere physical flesh-and-blood fingers of human foes and suggests that they have a cosmic dimension in the poet's mind, that is in the mind of an Anglo-Saxon Christian who read a Latin version of the Hebrew poem from within his different cultural setting and in the light of the spiritual understanding of scripture established by the Faith. It is an easy step from the broader dimension of all-embracing terror suggested by powerful waters to the unseen evil of demonic forces, which are also equipped with hands in Anglo-Saxon poetry.[7]

Also in Psalm 143 occurs one of the rare instances of hands

associated with a particularly devilish trait, falsehood. The enigmatic "strange children" whose "right hand is a right hand of falsehood" (A.V., 144: 7, 8) of the Authorised Version is clarified by Moffat's version: "rescue me from these alien hordes, / with lies upon their lips, / with right hand raised in a false oath." (Ps 144:7-8). The word "fæcne" in verse twelve of the Old English version has the basic meaning "deceitful", but it modifies bearn. The following verse is one of those instances in which the Old English translator dropped a word 'hand' from the Latin version (dextera eorum dextera iniquitatis) —a useless Hebrew repetition in an obscure expression, which he represents as doing evil: bið hyra seo swiðre symble abysgod / þæt hi unrihtes elne tiligeað 'their right hand is always busied, that they zealously cultivate (till) unrighteousness' (Ps 143:9). Another obscure verse suggesting perjury and false witness definitely includes a reference to the devil, although not to manus diaboli. In denouncing the wicked who have wronged the speaker, the psalmist says Constitue super eum peccatorem et diabolus stet a dextris ejus 'set a sinner over him and let a devil stand at his right hand' (Ps 109:6). The Old English reads: Gesete him synnfulle symble to ealdrum, / stande him on þa swyþeran hand swylce deoful 'Set a sinful one always as a lord over him, let him stand at his right hand like a devil' (Ps 108:5). This is not conclusive evidence, but serves to show the connection between the wicked human beings and their spiritual counterparts: there ought to be a devil standing there to accuse him, for the implication is that the Accuser would have a lot of evidence to present.

The hands of the enemy serve as a foil for God's greater power, as the psalms refer to His deliverance of those who cry to Him, both before and after He does so. Psalm 105 reproduces the Hebrew parallelism of the Vulgate: God alysde His people from heora feonda fæcnum handum 'the treacherous hands of their foes' and likewise from feogendra folmum 'the hands of those hating them' (Ps 105:10). The spiritual symbolism behind this reference to the crossing of the Red Sea[6] would have been functioning in the mind of an Anglo-Saxon reader of the psalm. In the next line the flod adrencte 'sea drowned' the foes. The double use of the word "hand" combines with the destruction by water to convey a powerful sense of the entrapping evil; yet God is still more powerful. Egypt represented slavery; to the Hebrew, literal bondage; to the Anglo-Saxon Christian, the spiritual bondage of sin. Later in the same psalm, the Old English poet-translator inserts a reference to enemy hands, to emphasize, perhaps unconsciously, his sense of the grip of evil; he renders the simple Latin qui salvavit eos 'who saved them' (Ps 106:21) as feonda folmum frecne generede 'saved them boldly from the hands of the enemy' (Ps 105:18). There is another example of insertion in this same category of God's triumph over the clutches of foes in Psalm 135: he us aferede feondum of handa 'he brought us out of the hands of the enemy' (Ps 135:25). The psalmist exclaims:

> Ic andette ecne drihten,
> þæne goodan god, forðan ic hine gleawne wat;
> is his mildheortnes mycel to worulde.
> Secge þæt nu ða, þæt hi sylfa god
> alysde, lifes weard, laðum of handa,
> and hi of sidfolcum gesamnade.
>
> (Ps 106:1-2)

> I praise the eternal Lord, the good God,
> because I know his wisdom, his lovingkindness
> is great toward the world. I say now that
> God himself freed them, the Guardian of life,
> out of the hands of the hostile ones, and
> gathered them from the multitude of people.

A final element in the hands of the wicked topic in the psalms is the matter of idols. This time it is the artisan rather than the warrior who can represent the force of evil. The creative work of men's hands, another theme of Anglo-Saxon poetry, may be directed by either good or wicked intentions on the part of the skilled human being: in the case of idol-making the intention is quintessentially evil because it expresses disobedience to the first commandment of the Decalogue.[9] Simulacra gentium argentum et aurum, opera manuum hominum (Pss 135:15; 115:4), a verse which in the Vulgate appears in identical form in two separate psalms, is translated with interesting additions and minor variations by the Anglo-Saxon poet:

> Þa wæron deofulgild deorce[10] hæþenra
> golde and seolfre, þa her geara menn
> worhtan wigsmiðas wræste mid folmum.
>
> (Ps 113:12)

> Then were the idols of the heathens of evil of dark
> gold and silver, that here long ago men made,
> idolmakers delicately with their hands.

> Beoð deofolgyld dysigra þeoda
> gold and seolfur, þe her geotað menn,
> and mid heora folmum fægere wyrceað.
>
> (Ps 134:15)

> The idols of foolish peoples are gold and
> silver, which men here poured forth,
> and worked fair with their hands.

The two O.E. translations (for gentium), 'foolish nations' and 'heathens', clearly identify the will governing these busy hands as evil. Both times the poet has used the word folm, although the choice is governed by the alliteration in only one of these cases; this may be coincidence, but again it suggests that this hand-word has a subtle sense of wrong or destructive action. Here the evil hands are not making war against and capturing or killing those who are good or favoured by God, but making objects which the Hebrew mind considered spiritually destructive.

Idols, which men "poured forth" in a kind of parody of the flood, are the greatest abomination to God and a dangerous snare to God's people,[11] whose "playing the harlot" after these false gods[12] is the cause of their many punishments, exiles and defeats throughout the Old Testament. The Anglo-Saxon word for idol used here brings out all their potential evil: deoful 'devil' is part of the meaning of an idol, since to worship idols was actually to worship demons, an attitude shared by the unknown Anglo-Saxon author of Beowulf who equates sacrifices to idols with praying to the"soul-slayer"(the devil).[13] A later verse in Psalm 113 seems very interesting in the light of this fact, since it describes the idols as having hands that cannot grasp and feet that cannot walk. On the analogy of this verse the Anglo-Saxon translator, apparently struck by the statement, inserts it also into Psalm 134, where it does not occur in the Vulgate: Handa hi habbað, ne hi hwæðere magon / gegrapian godes awiht . . . 'Hands they have however they cannot grasp anything of good' (Ps 134:18). The contra-

diction inherent in the idea of a hand that cannot grip brings out by contrast the imaginative force of the hand as the image of action, whether creative or destructive. The idols, in a sense, have hands that are not hands. Thus, wickedness employs living human hands (those of the wigsmiðas, the idolmakers of Psalm 113:12) to create that which is non-living, a demonic imitation of hands which cannot act at all; the idols — and devils — have merely the illusion of power, which really belongs only to God, whose hands and handiwork will be discussed later.

In the Psalms it is always clear that it is God who grants power to men to be exercised through their hands and, as we have seen, this divine supremacy also rules the wicked, who can do nothing without God's permission and often serve as His instruments. Clearly, then, the hands of good men depend on the power of God, which enables them to accomplish their purpose, whether through warfare or in any other type of human activity. The prayer gerece ure handgeweorc 'direct the work of our hands' (Ps 89:19) arises from a supplicant in the proper relationship to his Maker: faith,and submission by man of himself and all his doings to the will of God. The Vulgate repeats the phrase "opus manuum nostrarum dirige" (Ps 90:71), but the Anglo-Saxon translator has omitted one part of this instance of Hebrew parallelism as have Moffat and the translators of the New English Bible, all with some loss perhaps of the sense of fervency of the original Psalmist. Fervency is necessary for a people to live in a healthy relationship with the Holy One of Israel, and to survive the chastening of the loving Father who disciplines His

children. Because of free will, people are always able to turn away; but Psalm 124 contains an assurance that God will not allow the firenfulra tan 'the rod of the wicked' (Ps 124:3), to go against the righteous lest they handum ræccan 'reach out with their hands' to do unrihte 'unrighteousness', but rather He will quickly reward them (Ps 124:4). The verse ends with a plea to God to treat well with good things those who gedefe 'fittingly' keep their hearts righteous. Thus the attitude of the righteous man toward his Maker must be one of conscious dependence and trust, in contrast to the wicked who have no sense of their actual dependence.

The most frequent type of reference to the hands of good men expresses this dependence beautifully in the gesture of hands lifted in prayer:[14]

> þonne ic mine handa to þe holde þenede
> and mine sawle sette mid mode,
> swa eorðan bið ansyn wæteres
> gehyr me hrædlice, hæl me sybban.
>
> (Ps 142:6)

> Then I stretched out my hands to thee loyally
> and I established my soul with courage,
> as the earth is without water: hear me quickly,
> heal me then.

This verse conveys the feeling of need for God, for His strength, His protection, His presence, as a desire like a thirst.[15] Lifting of hands is compared to æfenlac 'evening sacrifice' (Ps 140:3) and may accompany the prayer of determined desperation;[16] the petitioner's eyes become unhale 'weakened, dim' as he þuruh ealne dæg 'all day long' calls to the God of glory and hebbe and ðenige 'lifts and holds out'

his hands (Ps 87:9). The Anglo-Saxon translator must have understood or experienced prayer this way when he translated the Vulgate's In die tribulationis meae Deum exquisivi; Manibus meis nocte contra eum . . . (Ps 77:2) as

> Ic on earfoðdæge ecne drihten
> sohte mid handum swyþe geneahhe,
> and ic on niht for him neode eode . . . .
>
> (Ps 76:2)

> In the day of hardship I sought the eternal Lord
> with my hands very earnestly (or frequently) and
> in the night I went in need of him . . . .

The poet makes the hands more instrumental in prayer, making it a physical as well as a mental and spiritual act, and inserts the adverbs expressing ardour. The fact that this describes the seeking of an answer from God in the past tense shows that the psalmist has received some enlightenment and has found the peace that he sought in his relationship with and understanding of God, and also has received an insight that will benefit the whole people.

Finally, the ultimate response to God and the highest activity in the psalms is simple worship of God, in recognition of His perfect holiness and righteousness. The psalmist says he continually raises his hands þær ic þine bebodu bryce lufade 'where I loved thy useful commandments' (Ps 118:48). The versifier appears to have been puzzled, as are modern translators, by the ancient version Levavi manus meas ad mandata tua 'I will raise my hands toward your commandments' (Ps 119:48)), which modern versions suggest has something to do with welcoming or adoring God's statutes (N.E.B., Moffat). More directly, in a different psalm, it is not to the law per se but to God that worship

is offered:

> Hebbaþ neodlice nihta gehwylcere
> eowre handa on halig lof
> and bletsiaþ balde drihten.
>
> (Ps 133:3)
>
> Lift your hands eagerly every night
> in holy praise and boldly bless the Lord.

Through an amusing and very understandable error in translation the Anglo-Saxon poet has transferred one other instance of hands lifted in worship in the Vulgate psalms to another category: that of the manual action of washing as a sign of the spiritual state or quality of innocence. The Latin version says Sic benedicam te in vita mea; / Et in nomine tuo levabo manus meas (Ps 63:4). The verb levabo 'I will lift up' apparently looked like lavabo 'I will wash' in the manuscript[17] and consequently the Old English version says:

> Swa ic ðe on minum life lustum bletsige
> and ic on naman þinum neode swylce
> mine handa þwea halgum gelome.
>
> (Ps 62:5)
>
> Thus I will gladly bless thee all my life,
> and in thy name diligently I will cleanse my
> hands often with the saints.

The gesture of washing hands was a sign of ritual purity in Jewish religious practice, and this is carried on in Christian ritual in the hand-washing in the mass. Daniélou cites the Church Fathers to whom the meaning of this rite was a sign of being "pure of all sin and all unworthiness. As the hands are the symbol of action, in washing them we signify the purity and innocence of our works . . . ."[18] This suggests that the poet thought of the fellowship of the "saints" in

the church, and associated hand-washing with being cleansed from sin, a connection made in the Latin version of another Psalm: Et lavi inter innocentes manus meas (Ps 73:13-14). The Old English reads ic mine heortan heolde mid soðe, / and mine handa þwoh, þær ic hete nyste . . . 'I uphold my heart with truth, and wash my hands, though I knew not hate' (Ps 72:11). Through the specific aspects of holding to truth and not hating, the O.E. version expresses the same concept of guiltlessness. This particular psalm emphasizes the importance of being innocent or clean in heart before God, not envying the apparent success of evil-doers, for their final end is destruction.

By another odd twist, however, a third reference to hand-washing is a sign not so much of innocence as of victory; the soðfæst (righteous man) rejoices at how the arleasan 'those without grace; the wicked' all perish, and his handa ðwehð 'washes his hands' in the blood of heathens and of men full of crime (or sin) (Ps 57:9).[19] It is a righteous man who acts in this psalm also, but the flavour of violence is in striking contrast to the psalm already cited, in which hand-washing is set over against the violence of the wicked (A.V., Ps 73:6). Somehow it is more reminiscent of that famous incident of hand-washing in the New Testament: Pilate with a basin of water, washing his hands of the blood of the innocent Man (Mt 27:24), an act by which he in fact declares his guilt. Yet in Psalm 57 by a strange contrast washing the hands in blood is the triumph of innocence, the "laughter of the just."

Another context in which the hand has significance is in connection with God's bounty as a generous master or as the giver of the

harvest. One such case involves an omission of the word "hand", which appears twice in the Vulgate in a parallel construction, but the O.E. poet omits the first of these. The servant looks to the hand of his master (only in the Latin) and the eyes of the þeowenan 'female slave' look to the hands of hire hlæfdigean 'her lady or mistress' as the eyes of God's faithful people are turned to Him, awaiting His mercy (Ps 122:3). The hand of a good human being, as the instrument of giving, inspires the hope of receiving from God, a sensitive image, although typically the O.E. translator has ignored the possibilities of the Hebrew parallelism. The other image is one of harvest. One of the two cases of the mower's hand in fact belongs under the first category of the hands of the wicked; however, both examples are symbolic of the human soul and its worth. One psalm, describing the firenfulra 'the wicked', says that they are like the hige 'hay, grass' (Ps 128:3) that grows up quickly on the huses þæce 'thatched roof of the house' (Ps 128:4), but withers quickly, so that

> Of þam he ne gefylleð folme æfre,
> þeah þe he hit mawe micle elne . . .
>
> (Ps 128:5)

> He will never fill his hand with it, though
> he mows it with great zeal . . .

The Anglo-Saxon poet may possibly be interpreting the Vulgate's qui metit 'he who mows, harvests' (Ps 129:7), as God reaping a harvest of souls, since the antecedent of "he" is not clear, but could be Drihten (in verse 3). Thus a man attempting to harvest poor quality hay is a symbol of the Lord "sifting the wicked" but not finding among them even a handful of souls fit for heaven. The other use of the image of the

mower's hand is an insertion into the original which did not mention either hands or mowing. It suggests a perversion of the natural fruitfulness of the harvest, thwarted by the action of the wicked; the psalmist compares himself to hay, perhaps prematurely or wantonly cut down and left to wither þonne hit bið amawyn manes folmum 'when it is mown down by a wicked man's hands (or, 'by hands of wickedness') (Ps 101:4). Note the use of the word folm in the context of a destructive act. The natural act of mowing grass and leaving it to dry comes to the Anglo-Saxon translator's mind as he reads percussus sum ut foenum, et ariut cor meum 'I am stricken (afflicted, slain) like hay, and my heart withers' (Ps 101:5). Because this psalm describes the feelings of the righteous man in the midst of persecution and hardship, he sees the withering of his heart like cut hay as having a cause, that is, the action of the wicked hands mowing him down represent the opposition and reproach of hostile men. Thus the hand motif can become tied in with other patterns of imagery, which necessitates some unravelling of their complex interweaving in order to understand the thinking of the O.E. poet-translator.

One of the most important functions of the hands of the righteous is in defence, often connected with the use of weapons and with the leading of God's people. However, because of a peculiar O.E. translation, the first example below does not quite fit the pattern. The original psalmist and the modern translators compare the children of a man's youth to arrows in the hands of a strong man: that is, they are a blessing, a defence, a protection and the following verse elaborates

on this fact. The Anglo-Saxon poet made something of a hash of this by translating as follows:

> Swa seo stræle byð hrorum on handa[20] swa lyðra bearn
> strangum and mihtigum heard ascyrped lungre gewitað.
>
> (Ps 127:5)
>
> As the arrow is sharpened hard in the hands for strong and mighty men, so the son of the wicked men pass away quickly.

The Latin reads ita filii excussorum (Ps 126:4), using a past participle of excutio 'to shake out, strike out, shake violently'. The other versions interpret this as "youth", that is, manly vigour, but our translator takes this genitive plural to mean "violent men" or "wicked men", and so arrives at quite a different image, that of the sons of wicked men passing away as quickly as arrows are sharpened in the hands of strong men. The honing of a weapon is a manual exercise of skill and strength which stands in contrast to the precarious position in life of a wicked man and his descendants who do not have God for their protector. They are the antithesis of the faithful who have the blessing of the Lord, without which it is in vain to labour in building or guarding (cf. A.V., Ps 127:1).

The psalmist praises the Drihten 'Lord', who mine handa to hilde teah / and mine fingras to gefeohtanne 'educates my hands to battle and my fingers to fighting' (Ps 143:1). In the next verse God is the fæst andfenga / and alysend 'sure defender and deliverer' (Ps 143:2), yet He uses the hands of the human who depends on Him to accomplish these victories. This psalm can also be read on a spiritual level, since for the Christian the true battles are against the unseen spiritual powers

and he must depend on God's training and weaponry — the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit — in the battle of faith. The Anglo-Saxon, accustomed, as the Jews were, to physical battles, would easily see the strong, skilled hands of the trained warrior as the perfect representation of a man of God's dryht (fighting company):

> Him on gomum biŏ godes oft gemynd;
> heo þæs wislice wynnum brucaŏ,
> and sweord habbaþ swylce on folmum.
>
> (Ps 149:6)
>
> In their throats often is the remembrance
> of God; they use it wisely with joy and have
> likewise a sword in their hands.

This verse expresses directly the concept of the righteous as God's servants in battle; the context of the whole psalm suggests the Church Triumphant participating in executing judgment on the peoples hostile to the Lord.[21] Thus the image of the human hand wielding weapons points to the spiritual warfare which the psalmist and his translator discerned beneath the surface of human affairs, and to how the people who follow God's leadership in this conflict are aided by Him and share in His triumph and joy, especially the ones whom the Deity selects to exercise leadership under Him.

The hand of the human leader is the instrument of God's power to deliver, whether in battle or by means of miraculous events:

> Folc þin ŏu feredest swa fæle sceap
> þurh Moyses mihtige handa
> and Aarones ealle gesunde.
>
> (Ps 76:17)
>
> Thou leddest thy people like beloved sheep
> all safe and sound through Moses' and Aaron's
> mighty hands.

Both Moses and Aaron performed miracles by the power of God.[22] Moses was also a military commander following God's instructions as to when to fight and failing only when the people shrank back and refused to trust God; Moses combines spiritual and military headship as he stands on the hilltop with his arms raised, and when his hands grow too heavy for him, the battle goes badly for God's people until others lift up and support his arms and hands.[23] One of the clearest examples of this kind of divinely-chosen chieftain is King David, the shepherd boy who became the shepherd of the people of Israel whom he fedeð 'feeds' and with his folmum 'his hands' leads them forth (Ps 77:71). The Vulgate has in intellectibus manuum suarum deduxit eos 'in the wisdom of his hands he led them out' (Ps 78:72); the hands themselves have skill or wisdom, learned from their owner's experience of "following ewes great with young" (A.V., Ps 78:71), a good preparation for the kind of kingship God chooses to bestow on his people in David. Unfortunately our poet did not include this beautiful nuance in his translation, though he does include the hand of the leader, using folm in an unusual way because of the weak alliteration. However skilful the human hand, though, it is God who has the will and the power to settan 'establish' his swiðran hand 'right hand' (or "his rule" N.E.B.) so that he seastreamum sybþan wealde 'he would rule the sea-currents afterwards' (Ps 88:23). This is another instance in which the translator has omitted a "manum" because of the superfluous Hebrew parallelism; however, he retains dexteram in his version, since the right hand, the stronger, is symbolic of rule and authority, the omnipotence of God which the psalmist sees behind the

sovereignty of the human king.

The last category of the hands of man is the hand symbolizing his consciousness of his dependence upon his Creator. In each case it is the right hand, though sometimes this is less specifically the hand of fingers and palm but may be translated "side". The right hand or right side seems to be the position of honour[24] or defence. The halig drihten 'Holy Lord' will keep thee, the psalmist says, and will be þin mundbora mihtig 'thy mighty protector' ofer þa swiðran hand 'at the right hand' symble æt þearfe 'ever at need' (Ps 120:5), an expression common in A.S. heroic poetry in which a faithful warrior gives aid in any emergency. Another example specifies the one needing God's defence as weak and poor: God stands dextris pauperis 'at the right hand of the poor' (Ps 109:30) in the Vulgate. The Old English reads:

> He sylfa gestod on þa swyðran hand,
> þær he þearfendra þinga teolode;
> he mine sawle swylce gehealde
> wið ehtendra egsan griman.
>
> (Ps 108:30)

> He himself stood at the right hand, where he considered the affairs of the needy; he guarded my soul likewise against the fearful terror of persecutors.

The general case of the poor at whose right hand God stands is made specific here as the psalmist tells how he was divinely protected, giving praise to his Lord before he does so. A third example of the right hand of the protected believer also brings in the theme of God's leading and guiding:

> Þu mine swyþran hand sylfa gename
> and me mid þinon willan well gelæddest,

and me þa mid wuldres welan gename.

(Ps 72:19)

Thou thyself took my right hand, and led me well by thy will, and afterward received me with the prosperity of glory.

Here the picture is one of a father taking his child by the hand and directing his toddling steps, a perfect image of humble dependence on God, who, at the right hand of one of His children, is a mighty protector and reliable guide. Thus the hand motif helps in discovering both the obedient attitude of the good man as one of God's creatures and the attributes of the Deity to whom he lifts his hands in supplication, worship or trustful clinging or for whom he uses them in service, carrying out the purposes of his Creator.

The third and largest category in the psalter is the hand of God as the Eternal Creator, Upholder, Guide, Deliverer and righteous Judge. First of all, God created the world, earth, sky and sea. The psalmist addresses God as eternal and all-powerful, outlasting His creation which will wear out like a garment:

Æt fruman þu, drihten, geworhtest
eorþan frætwe and upheofen
þæt is heahgeweorc handa þinra.

(Ps 101:22)

At the beginning thou, Lord, wroughtest the adornment of earth and heaven above, which is the excellent work of thy hands.

In the context of the psalm God is the artisan or the tailor, making frætwe 'adornments' (a word inserted by the O.E. poet where the Latin has only terram) which will wear out like wædum 'clothes' (Ps 101:23);

the words frætwe and heahgeweorc both suggest craftmanship. In contrast to a human being who cannot outlast the things he makes, the psalm emphasizes that the Creator of the world lives forever. Another psalm mentions the creating of the world with reference to God as ruler rather than artisan. He wealdeð 'rules' and sette 'established' the sea and worhte his folme eac foldan drige 'made also with his hands the dry earth' (Ps 94:5). However, the Creator is still depicted using hands to form the earth, a faithful rendering of the Latin original in this verse. Although the idea of God as Waldend 'Ruler' is important, the preceding verse — in manu ejus sunt omnes fines terrae 'in his hands are all the ends of the earth' (Ps 95:4) — must have seemed like a redundancy to the poet who substitutes a rather different idea, the assertion that drihten usser 'our Lord' will never wiðdrifeð 'drive off, reject' his agen folc 'own people' (Ps 94:4). Thus a further image of God as Lord of creation is dropped in favour of one describing His faithfulness towards men, who are a special part of the world He made.

God is the creator of mankind, a relationship which the psalms clearly establish, and the psalmist understands that God requires a response from human beings to complete the relationship:

> Handa me ðine holde geworhton
> and gehiwedan mid higecræfte;
> syle me nu andgyt, þæt ic eall mæge
> þine bliðe bebodu beorhte leornian.
>
> (Ps 118:73)

> Thou has fashioned me graciously with thy hands and formed [me] with wisdom; give me now understanding, that I may learn clearly (lucidly) all thy pleasant commandments.

The work of God's hands in this instance is in creating not only the body of man but also his understanding. In the second line of this verse, the words "with wisdom" could apply both to God and to the creature whom He made in his own image. Higecræfte means literally "power of mind". Therefore, God forms man with wisdom; that is, by the power of His word, or God forms man as a creature with the power to think. The second half of the verse is a prayer for enlightenment, that man may properly use the mind God has created for him and come to understand God's commandments as bliðe 'good, pleasant, bringing happiness', in accordance with God's wisdom. The poet has added this modifier to mandata tua, which helps to bring out the sense of the mind of man responding positively to the mind of his Creator. In another psalm the Anglo-Saxon poet has inserted into a plea for mercy the thought that man is made by God's hands; the psalm expresses sorrow for sin and asks, miltsa þu me 'have mercy on me' and help ðu, hælend min, handgeweorces þines anes 'help thou, my saviour (healer), thine own handiwork'.[25] This word handgeweorc seems to capture for the Anglo-Saxon all that is meant by man's creaturely state and dependence on God to such an extent that the O.E. translator introduces the concept into this prayer expressing man's spiritual need for God's forgiveness.

A similar idea occurs in another psalm, in which the psalmist expresses trust in God's great mildheortnes 'mercy, pity' or 'mild-heartedness', that he will dome gylde 'repay [me] with justice' and appeals to him not to forseoh 'reject, neglect' þæt þu sylfa ær/ mid þinum handum her geworhtest 'that which thou thyself formerly made here with thy hands' (Ps 137:8). This rather imprecise expression

may include more than the speaker himself, possibly referring to the land and all it contains, but, in context, primarily the psalmist is thinking of his personal need of God's help; thus the words are a natural effusion of the creaturely man who knows his dependence on God his maker for life and safety. The idea of God's hands fashioning human beings serves not only as a powerful image of the divine sovereign power over the world but also as an evocative symbol of man's subordinate position in the universe and expresses the emotional response of those who recognize this as the central fact in their lives.

The hand of the gardener and herdsman is another image of God's care for His creation. One psalm describes living beings who dwell on earth: is þeos eorðe eac eall gefylled/ þinra gesceafta 'this earth also is filled with thy creatures' (Ps 103:23), from wildeor 'wild beasts' (v.19) such as leon hwelpas 'lion cubs' (v.20) to sea creatures such as dracan 'Leviathan' (v.25). These all wilniað 'beg for, seek, desire' their ætes 'food' from God, who [his] halgan hand ontynan 'opens his holy hand' and fills them with fægere gode 'fair good things' (Ps 103:25-6). This paints a picture of God as almost a benevolent livestock farmer, whose charges feed out of His hand, with even man included in the list of animals (Ps 103:22), since he too is one of God's creatures. Again, Onhlidest ðu þine handa 'thou openest thine hand', and fyllest 'fills' each wise one of ealra wihta 'all creatures' with bletsunga 'favours' (Ps 144:17). The oft-used biblical metaphor of God as the vine-dresser also appears in the psalms; Psalm 79 is an appeal to God to help His people, the wingeard 'vineyard' which ðin seo swiðre

sette æt frymðe 'thy right hand established at the beginning' (Ps 79:14). This phrase has imbedded in it the suggestion of God as initiator and creator as at the beginning when He planted a garden of all goodly plants (Gen 2:9). Thus the references to hand are significant in coming to an understanding of God as both Creator and Sustainer of all life.

The hand of God may be symbolic also of the Almighty's protection, guidance and care in the lives of His people. This divine favour is suggested by the image of the hand held over someone:

> Si þin seo swiðre hand ofer soðne wer
> and ofer mannes sunu; þu his mihta ðe
> geagnadest, ealle getrymedest
> weoruda drihten; ne gewitað we fram ðe.
>
> (Ps 79:16)

> Let your right hand be over the righteous man,
> and over the son of man; you dedicated his
> strength to yourself, Lord of Hosts, strengthened
> all; we will not leave you.

Here the poet has dropped one "hand" from the Latin Fiat manus tua super virum dexterae tuae 'let your hand be over the man of your right hand' (Ps 80:18), substituting "righteous man" for the phrase "man of your right hand" (that is, a favoured, trusted servant), and transposing "right" to the beginning of the line as an adjective. The soðne wer whom the Lord established in strength is the leader of the people in the context of the psalm; he is dependent on God for his power and position symbolized by God's hand above him, and the prayer that this support should continue shows awareness of this fact.

Another verse connects this overshadowing by God's hand with

creation:

> Efne þu, drihten, eall oncneowe
> þa ærestan, eac þa nehstan;
> þu me gehiwadest handa þinre,
> me ofer heafod holde gesettest.
>
> (Ps 138:3)

> Indeed, Lord, thou knowest all things,
> the first and the last; thou hast formed me
> with thy hands and placed [them] graciously
> over my head.

Because the position of the word 'hand' has been shifted, the Old English is less explicit than the Latin, which reads tu formasti me et posuisti super me manum tuam 'you formed me and placed your hand over me' (Ps 139:5). However, both versions establish the connection between the creation of mankind by an all-knowing God and His care for and protection of His creatures. In the light of this origin, the rightness of man's gratitude is suggested by the laudatory adjective holde 'graciously' which the poet has inserted into the description of God's gesture of protectiveness; he sees this creation and continuing care as grace, "the unmerited favour of God".

The image of God's hands taking hold of man or performing some gesture imparting strength or favour also occurs several times. In one psalm, the human voice says, me ðin seo swiðre onfencg 'thy right hand upholds me' always at need forðon min sawl on ðe soðe getreoweð 'because my soul truly trusts in Thee' (Ps 62:8). This verse further clarifies the relationship between the Creator and the creature by defining the ones who experience God's defence as those who trust in Him. Another way of expressing this is to say that one's soul is

symble on ðinum / holdum handum . . . 'ever in thy faithful hands' (Ps 118:109) (which significantly is changed from the inexplicable in manibus meas 'in my hands' of the Vulgate) and the psalmist adds here an expression of devotion to þa halgan æ 'holy law', bringing together the theme of dependence on God's power with that of righteousness and innocent men.

Sometimes there is so much emphasis on God's action that the human agent scarcely seems to be doing anything. God gemette 'found' his servant David, handum smyrede 'anointed [him] with his hands' with holy oil, fultumeð 'helps' him with his fæle earm 'trusty arm' and strengthens him with great might (Ps 88:18). Here the word hand, which does not appear in the Vulgate, is inserted as if representing God's direct action, though in the original the hands that did the actual annointing of David were those of the prophet Samuel (I Sam 16:13). The word 'arm' is an extension of the hand image emphasizing the aspect of strength; God's power is upholding this man. The fact that the human agent may be wayward or unwilling is no deterrent to the Almighty; this only emphasizes further the divine initiative, and also suggests the unwavering faithfulness of the Father's love for his child:

> Hwæt, me þin hand þyder ofer holma begang
> lædeð lustum, and me lungre eft
> þin seo swiðre þær gehendeð.
>
> (Ps 138:8)
>
> Lo, on that side, over the expanse of
> the waves, thy hand leads me gladly, and
> quickly again thy right hand catches me there.

The insertion of the little words lustum 'gladly' and lungre 'quickly' — which have no equivalent in the unadorned Latin — add a delicate suggestion of God's patient goodness and love toward His recalcitrant children. Not only with His own hand, but also through those of angels, God guards and cares for man wherever he goes, as the psalmist declares: God has commanded His angels that mid earmum 'with their arms' and on heora handum 'in their hands' they should heoldan georne 'hold eagerly' man so that he might wilwega wealdan 'possess pleasant ways' (Ps 90:11). Here the translator has inserted both 'arm' and 'hand', adding to the following verse's And þe on folmum feredan swylce 'and in their hands likewise bear thee . . .' (Ps 90:12), a multi-levelled picture of His operation. In addition to overshadowing His chosen servants with His hand, God (or His angels) thus grasps, embraces, surrounds and carries man in His hands, the instruments of the invisible spiritual power which protects and upholds every living being. Only those who are geworpene on widne hlæw 'cast into the broad barrow' and are fram þinre handa heane adrifene 'wretchedly driven away from thy hands' (Ps 87:5), which is to say, those who are dead and damned, cannot experience the benefit of God's sustaining hand.

When the psalmist finds himself or his nation in the situation of danger or defeat, knowing that God is powerful to uphold and protect, naturally he cries out to Him to deliver, sometimes in a tone of hurt or complaint that He has apparently abandoned His people despite His covenant with them. Many psalms also search for the reason for this anomalous situation:

> For hwan awendest þu wuldres ansyne
> æfre fram us, eac þa swyðran hand
> of þinum sceate...?
>
> (Ps 73:10)
>
> Why hast thou turned thy glorious countenance
> ever from us, also thy right hand from thy
> bosom...?

Psalm 77 is a long explanation of why God has apparently withdrawn His support: the rebellious and stubborn people who na gemynd hæfdan hu his seo mycle hand / on gewindæge 'did not keep in mind how his great hand in the day of struggle' guarded and carried them (Ps 77:42). Moffat translates this "hand" (as he does in many other cases) as "power": "They remembered not his power, nor the day he saved them from the foe" (Ps 78:42). This psalm describes the disasters that have and will come upon the people of Israel for their disobedience, though still they will not repent.

In consequence, therefore, of human wickedness both among the Jews themselves and from outside enemies, the psalms make many appeals to God to Onsend þine handa of heanessum 'send thy hands from the height'(Ps 143:8). One such plea for deliverance appears in two O.E. psalms with minor variations on the identical Latin salvum fac dextera tua, et exaudi me (Pss 60:5 and 108:7). Psalm 59 begins with the statement that God has cast off His people, then cries Do me þin seo swyðre hand symle halne 'save me ever with thy right hand' (Ps 59:5), reinforcing the prayer with gehyr me, halig god 'hear me, holy God' (Ps 59:5), or hælynd drihten 'saving or healing Lord' (Ps 107:6). Some of these appeals for deliverance are accompanied by strong arguments as to why God should help, as if He needs persuasion. One

psalm requests:

> Syn me þine handa on hælu nu,
> and þæt domlice gedon weorðe;
> forðon ic þine bebodu geceas . . . .
>
> (Ps 118:173)

> May thy hands now be as salvation for me,
> and be it done worthily; because I chose thy
> commandment . . . .

The will to be obedient to the Law, the desire to do right in God's sight, is a demonstration of the psalmist's love for God. It seems designed to set forth his case as one having some right to claim divine help to combat wickedness, which is both in himself and in others in the context of this psalm. Another reason given is that others may see God's righteous and merciful actions and honour Him for them. In a psalm which presents this argument, the Anglo-Saxon poet manages to work in a reference to Christ—without precedent in the Latin text—in the preceding verse:

> . . . help min, drihten god,
> and me halne gedo, halynde Crist,
> for þinre þære myclan mildheortnysse.
> Þæt hi soð witan, þæt si þin sylfes hand
> and þu þas gedydest, drihten usser.
>
> (Ps 108:25-6)

> . . . help me, Lord God, and give me salvation,
> saviour Christ, for the sake of thy great
> mercy. So that they should know the truth,
> that it is thine own hand, and thou hast done
> this, our Lord.

This converts the original into a prayer to Christ, God incarnate, and the concept of the hand of God literally takes on flesh. From this it is clear that the Christian poet was thinking in terms of the divine saving power operating through the Risen Man, whose hand was nailed

to the Cross for the sake of mankind, the ultimate sign (sacrament) of God's love and favour toward the human race, expressed in the solid physical reality of the crucifixion.[26] In the clause "to let them know thy power by this" (Ps 109:27), Moffat translates conceptually, and he does not mention Christ, so that the modern version lacks the christological and spiritual dimension; God's action of rescuing His servant from the wicked man is the sign both of His mercy and of His power. Because of the many times in the past that God heard and answered a prayer for deliverance from enemies or other kinds of trouble, the psalms also express trust and confidence that He will do it again: though I walk on midle manes 'in the midst of evil' and costunga cnysdan 'tribulation crushes' You rescue me from angry enemies, You me gerǽhtest recere mid handa 'reached out promptly to me with [your] hands' and me þin swyðre sneome hælde 'your right hand swiftly saved me' (Ps 137:7). His doing so is a reassurance to His people of His mercy and faithfulness, and a sign or evidence to other men of His reality, power and justice.

The hand is the chief and distinctive agent of human activity, and it seems important that it appears with reference to God's activity as well as His power. God seems to be the Maker, Doer, Saver and Initiator of all that happens, both in the realm of the ordinary and in the domain of the miraculous. The Anglo-Saxon translator inserts a reference to this acting, controlling hand in a psalm celebrating God's mighty acts of control over nature in His deliverance of the house of Jacob from Egypt. God changes stone into a wide sea, and cliffs he likewise turns into wells of water mid his gewealdenre hand 'with his

ruling hand' (Ps 113:7). God is also active in history, and the psalmist reminds himself of what God has done by direct intervention in human affairs — with His hands — mindful of the weorca wræclicra and worda 'wondrous words and works' which þara hean handa haligan drihtnes 'the high hands of the holy Lord' have done. The psalm also recalls that He worked "a fair wonder" at the beginning (Ps 76:2), which the context of the psalm makes clear is the Exodus, the inspiring drama of liberation which was the commencement of the nation's history. These actions in history are included in the all-embracing term "handiwork" as in the light of present difficulties the psalmist remembers all the great acts of God in the past:

> Þonne ic on mode gemyndgade,
> hu me ærran dagas oft alympan,
> metegade on mode ealle þine mæran weorc
> and ymbe þine handgeweorc hogode georne.
>
> Ps 142:5

> Then I remember in my mind how earlier days
> for me often happened, I meditate in my spirit
> on all thy famous work and about thy handiwork
> I think zealously.

From the creation to the earlier days of his own life when he personally experienced God's help (which is an idea not found in the Latin but arises from the insertion of me by the A.S. poet) the psalmist remembers all the things God has made and done, the work of His hands. This inspires him to trust in a future act of deliverance and to have faith that it will be done (Ps 142:8-10). A further response of man, possible for the one who is trusting in the deliverance to come (Ps 91:8-9), is praise, singing and celebration, such as that found in the whole of Psalm 91. The focus of this psalm's proclamation of God's mildness and

faithfulness toward mankind is the record of all that He has done, and the psalmist plays his ten-stringed instrument

> forðon þu me on þinum weorcum wisum lufadest;
> hihte ic to þinra handa halgum dædum.
>
> (Ps 91:3)
>
> because Thou has loved me in thy wise works;
> I rejoice in the holy deeds[27] of thy hands.

Thus the psalms present the Lord of Creation as also the Lord of History, active in protecting and delivering His people, showing His power, love and faithfulness and inspiring the responses of trust, obedience and joyful praise.

One kind of act in history attributed to God is victory in battle, to which there are many references in the psalms. One example is the conquest of the land of Canaan and the casting out of the idolatrous inhabitants:

> He hi þa gelædde on leofre byrig
> and haligre, ða his hand begeat.
>
> (Ps 77:54)
>
> He led them into the loved holy city which
> his hand seized.

When in later days enemies conquer the city, the psalmist cries out to God to repeat the former act, to lift His hands[28] and <u>hyn hiora oferhygd</u> 'lay low their pride', because of the <u>wyrgnessa</u> 'abuse, cursing' of the <u>wraðe feondas</u> 'angry foes' (Ps 73:3). To give them victory over their enemies would be God's consistent way with Israel if they were obedient, but, as He says, <u>nele min folc mine stefne æfre gehyran</u> 'my folk will not ever listen to my voice' (Ps 80:11). Defeat was merely the logical consequence of living according to their own will and desires.

If they had on wegas mine woldan gangan 'been willing to walk in my ways', God promised to overthrow and humiliate their foes, and þæt micle mægen minra handa / heora ehtendras ealle fornam 'the great might of my hands would utterly sweep away their persecutors' (Ps 80: 13). The litany of Psalm 135 recounts the battles won by God who acwealde cyningas mycle 'killed many kings' (Ps 135:18), and sums up all the great events of the Exodus and invasion and occupation of the new land in the verse On mihtigre mære handa / and on eallmihte earmes swylce 'in his mighty famous hands, and likewise in the great might of his arm' (Ps 135:12), He led the people of Israel safe and sound out of Egypt (Ps 135:11). Thus the power of God's hand in human history is presented in the psalms; the irrestible might of God who acts can be thwarted only by the sinful rebellion of those whom He wishes to lead and protect.

Finally, God's might is closely connected with His life-or-death-dealing power as a righteous judge. One verse connects the might of God's hand with His judging in what may be a symbolically significant manner:

> Wesan hea mihte handa þinre
> ahafen ofer hæleðas; halig seo swyðre is,
> þines setles dom soð gegearwod.
>
> (Ps 88:12)

> The high might of thy hand be lifted over men;
> thy right hand is holy, thy judgment seat
> adorned with truth.

The holy, raised right hand represents the power of right judgment exercised against the rebellious and murmuring Israelites who were ungrateful for being freed from slavery because of some inconveniences

in the wilderness: God his handa ahof 'raised his hands' and wished to drive them quickly away in the wasteland (Ps 105:21). Another symbol of God's power of judgment is the cup He holds, of which sculon ealle drincan synfulle 'all the sinful will have to drink' (Ps 74:8). The dema 'judge' is drihten sylfe 'the Lord himself' (Ps 74:6), who humbles some and quickly raises others, forþon se wines steap on waldendes handa / fægere gefylled is; þæs onfehð þe he ann 'because the cup of wine in the hand of the ruler is well filled; he attacks whom he wishes' (Ps 74:7). Here also, judgment is connected with God's hand (that is, His power), and He metes out the drink of punishment to whom He wills.

In describing God as Judge there is a final example of the image of the hand of the craftsman, a hint and a reminder that the Judge is also the Creator:

> Ys his handgeweorc hyge soðfæstra,
> ryhte domas, þa he ræran wyle;
> wærun his bebodu ealle treowfæste,
> on ealra weorulda weoruld wurdan soðfæste
> and on rihtnysse ræda getrymede.
>
> (Ps 110:5)

> His handiwork is just judgments,
> that he will establish for the mind of
> the righteous; his commandments were all
> reliable,[28] forever and ever they were
> righteous, and in equity he sets in order
> his counsels.

Here, even the abstract qualities and actions such as righteousness and equitable judgments are made by the hand of the Deity. Thus the hand word brings together different themes and helps us to see God in the Psalms as the Anglo-Saxon Christian versifier saw Him: the single great source of creative, life-giving truth and power to whom human beings

are to give the creaturely response of love and grateful obedience, so that their hands too may do that which is just, righteous and established on a firm foundation.

Thus we can see that in the Psalms the hand functions as a concrete sign of the spiritual or moral condition of its owner. This may be expressed through symbolic gestures, whose meaning depends on which category the person belongs to. The lifted hands of the righteous man represent his consciousness of dependence upon his Maker, or worship, or supplication. The raised hand of the wicked man, however, can be emblematic of falsehood, a trait which precisely is a denial of creaturely acknowledgment of the God of all truth. The hand of God, lifted high above both kinds of human hands, signifies judgment, implying a just separation between the two categories of men, with punishment for the latter. In other ways the hand may be a sign also: washing the hands signifies innocence; being positioned at the right hand of man or God denotes honour or respect. In all of these, the hand is a more or less static symbol of the abstract aspects of character.

However, the hand is also a focus of actions, the instrument through which power flows in ways that also illustrate the spiritual or moral condition of its possessor. The question of actions leads inevitably to an examination of the will, and it can be determined from what the hand does whether the character's will is attuned to that of God or whether it hears only self and therefore turns to disobedience. The imagery of the warrior is found in all three categories, divine, human, and demonic (wicked) in a conflict of powers which, since the will

is either holy or evil in purpose, actually boils down to a two-sided war: God versus Satan, good versus evil, life versus death. God's hands defend and give victory to the righteous in the contest. In defence of perfect holiness, He even turns over His own people to the hands of the enemy, so that wills which have begun to turn to evil may be chastened and straightened. In this way battle is connected with judgment; allowing an impious people to overrun them is God's judgment on the sins of His own people. When they repent in their captivity and call upon the Lord to deliver them with His hand from on high, He does so, and the tables may be turned. The hands of the just conquer the ungodly, and this is a judgment upon the latter for their iniquity. On another plane, this two-sided conflict is a campaign for souls; the physical battles represent the spiritual warfare which is unseen. Satan longs to bring the souls of men into bondage to himself, which leads to death; God, on the other hand, offers mankind life and a restoration of the broken relationship with his Creator. Between these two alternatives the free will of man must choose, and in further Anglo-Saxon poems to be discussed in following chapters, we find the combat raging in earnest on both levels.

Behind the war, the underlying principle is the fact of creation. The power to make or build belongs primarily to the Scyppend 'Creator', who initiated all that exists including mankind and also sustains everything in existence. This fact is the basis of right in the battle, for the demonic will can create nothing. It can only pervert and destroy that which was brought into existence by the might of

the Maker. The imagery surrounding creation in the psalms is that of the gardener, or herder and feeder of living creatures. The hands of men imitate this godlike function and in the Psalms ask for God's power to make prosper what they do, since all depends on Him. Another image common in O.E. poetry but rare in the Psalms is that of the artisan as sub-creator. The Psalter gives the picture of the craftsman making idols as a devilish perversion of the creative power given to man. Other poems yield examples of the positive use of human creativity. In the following two chapters, all these categories and functions of the hand outlined above will be examined to determine in what proportion they occur and how they function poetically in the context of any given work.

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

1. George Philip Krapp, ed. The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records, Vol. V: The Paris Psalter and the Meters of Boethius (New York, 1932), pp.24-26. All quotations from the Anglo-Saxon Psalter are from this edition and will be indicated by Psalm and verse numbers given in the text. The exception will be footnoted. Quotations from the Vulgate will be given in Latin. There is a problem in determining the authentic Vulgate numbering, arising from conflicting systems presently in use. George Philip Krapp's discussion of this problem makes it clear that the Vulgate edition which he uses corresponds to the King James version: "According to the numbering of the Paris Psalter, the first of the metrical translations of the Psalms would be numbered fifty-one, but fifty-two in the Vulgate and the Authorized English Bible . . . . In the Vulgate and in the English Bible Psalm 147 contains twenty verses, but in the Paris Psalter, these verses are divided into two Psalms . . ." (Krapp, op.cit., p.xiv). The edition of the Vulgate which I have used is of this type (see footnote 2).

   However, other lists describe the Vulgate in terms which correspond exactly to the Old English psalter numbering. James M. Ure follows "the usual numbering in editions of the Vulgate Psalms", listing as an example Macaulay and Brebner, The Vulgate Psalter (Edinburgh, 1913), and lists in this table "the comparative enumeration in that Psalter and the English (Authorized and Revised) version":

Vulgate		English Bible
Pss 1-8	=	Pss 1-8
Ps 9	=	Pss 9 + 10
Pss 10-112	=	Pss 11-113
Ps 113	=	Pss 114 + 115
Ps 114	=	Ps 116 (vv.1-9)
Ps 115	=	Ps 116 (vv.10-end)
Ps 116-145	=	Pss 117-146
Ps 146	=	Ps 147 (vv.1-11)
Ps 147	=	Ps 147 (vv.12-end)
Pss 148-150	=	Pss 148-150

   (James M. Ure, ed., The Benedictine Office (Edinburgh, 1957), p.17.)

   References will be made to recent translations of the Bible where appropriate for the sake of comparison. These will be identi-

fied by the abbreviation of the title: N.E.B. for the New English Bible (Oxford and Cambridge: Oxford University Press and Cambridge University Press, 1967); 'A.V.' for the Authorized Version (The Holy Bible: Authorized King James Version, New York: The World Publishing Company, n.d.); R.S.V. for the Revised Standard Version (London: Oxford University Press, 1952). A one-man translation is also included and will be designated in the text by the author's surname: Moffat (James Moffat, A New Translation of the Bible, London: Hodder and Stoughton Ltd., 1948). In spite of his peculiarities, Moffat sometimes translates very strikingly from the Hebrew, and is often cited by C. S. Lewis in his perceptive Reflections on the Psalms (London: Fontana Books, 1961).

2. Vulgate Psalm 69:4. The edition used is the Biblia Sacra, Sixti V et Clementis VIII (London: Samuel Bagster & Sons, 1880). Some other editions of the Vulgate give both sets of numbers.

3. I make frequent reference in this chapter to "Hebrew" parallelism (and "Hebrew" thought, etc.). This is not intended as an assertion that the Anglo-Saxon poet worked from or even knew the original Old Testament language; it simply means that the peculiar shape which the Hebrew psalmist gave to his material is faithfully reflected in the Latin translation. The Old Testament contains a distinctive style of thinking and expression which is summed up as "Hebrew", in contradistinction to the "Greek" type of theology which creeps into the New Testament in places and also into Christian dogma (Dr. Ben Meyer, "Religion 2E6: The Beginnings of Christianity Lectures and Class Notes", 1971-72, a McMaster course based on textual criticism).

This "Hebrew" parallelism is the frequent use in the psalms of a technique of repeating an idea in slightly different words. As C. S. Lewis remarks, it is "either a wonderful piece of luck or a wise provision of God's, that poetry which was to be turned into all languages should have as its chief formal characteristic one that does not disappear (as mere metre does) in translation" (Reflections on the Psalms, p.12), even in prose translations. I find it very puzzling, but it is a fact that the Anglo-Saxon translator often ignores this parallelism in his version. The omissions of the word "hand" from the O.E. psalter from verses where it occurs in the original are mostly in one part of a parallel structure which has been altered or dropped altogether. This is strange because Hebrew parallelism is not unlike the typical Anglo-Saxon poetic technique of cumulative variation, which also is a repetition of the same idea in different words; one would have expected that the poet-translator would take to the Hebrew style like a duck to water. Possibly this is due to the fact that Hebrew parallelism is strongly poetic, but the translator of the Psalter was writing in a later period than the great O.E. poems and in alliteration, in metre and in diction his work is much less rich and beautiful than the early compositions

(Kenneth and Celia Sisam, The Paris Psalter, p.17; their description of the poet's shortcomings is extensive and rather severe).

4. See Appendix A, "The Hand Coming Down from the Clouds". Verse 8 refers to both the hands of the wicked making captive and the rescuing hand of God.

5. The syntax of this verse makes it difficult to determine just whose hands are meant. Taking the three dative plural expressions to be grammatically parallel, I have translated "from great hands", that is, the hands of enemies. However, mærum handum could also be in the instrumental case and therefore the sentence would read "Loose me and lead out from hostile waters, from many sea currents, by thy famous hands", which would place this verse in the category of an appeal to God to deliver (see Chapter One, below, page). The Latin reads erue me de manu filiorum alienorum (Ps 144:11), which would make it clear that the hands belong to the fremde bearn, but the O.E. poet has changed the structure and made bearn the subject of a subordinate clause. Seeing this raises the possibility that the poet may have intended to refer to God's hands, in which case the change would be significant, shifting the emphasis from that which makes captive to the power of God to deliver from captivity.

6. See Appendix B.

7. One example is found in the poem Christ and Satan (George Philip Krapp, The Junius Manuscript, p.141) when Satan lamenting his fall from heaven says:

> Eala þæt ic eam ealles leas ecan dreames,
> þæt ic mid handum ne mæg heofon geræcan . . . .
> (167-8)
> Alas that I am totally without eternal joy, that I with my hands may not reach heaven . . . .

This posture of reaching towards heaven with the hands is an image of prayer, but Satan, knowing that he is in hell forever (true theological Despair), does not and cannot pray. He spits forth these words almost as an orison of defiance.

8. The preceding verses of Psalm 106 make it clear that the foe is the Egyptians: "He rebuked the Red Sea, and it became dry; and he led them through the deep as through a desert." (R.S.V., Ps 106:9). This verse clearly establishes that the context is the Exodus.

9. Depending on whether old Catholic or Protestant numbering is followed, the prohibition of graven images either is part of the

first commandment or stands as the second by itself. Deuteronomy 7:8-10 reads

> "You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments."

The first commandment, "You shall have no other gods before me" (Ex. 5:7) was regarded as the foundation of Judaism and Christianity alike, and is one reason for the condemnation of idols. Likewise under the cursings in a later chapter, the Bible itself refers to hands in connection with idols: "'Cursed be the man who makes a graven or molten image, an abomination to the LORD, a thing made by the hands of a craftsman, and sets it up in secret.' And all the people shall answer and say "Amen"" (Deut. 27:15).

10. The word deorce 'dark, evil' is not in the genitive plural nor in the nominative and therefore cannot modify either deofulgild (nominative) or hæþenra (genitive plural). Though it seems odd to refer to either of these bright, precious metals as "dark", it is because the use to which they are put makes them evil (cf. below, footnote #11).

11. Deuteronomy 7:25-26, giving instructions about entering the promised land, says the following about idols: "The graven images of their gods you shall burn with fire; you shall not covet the silver or the gold that is on them, or take it for yourselves, lest you be ensnared by it; for it is an abomination to the LORD your God. And you shall not bring an abominable thing into your house, and become accursed like it; you shall utterly detest and abhor it; for it is an accursed thing." Even the gold that was on an idol is spiritually very dangerous and could lead to a breaking of the first commandment.

12. Whoredom in the Hebrew Bible is a metaphor which thematizes the spiritual state of the Israelites when they were not keeping the first commandment. God instructs the prophet Hosea to marry an unfaithful woman as a graphic demonstration of how "the land commits great harlotry by forsaking the LORD" (Hosea 1:2), a striking inverted sacrament of their spiritual condition. This prophet gains a profound understanding both of steadfast love of God and His holiness, and also of the sin of the people which is like breaking the eighth commandment as well as the first because of the covenant in which the people promised to keep these commandments.

13. Hwilum hie geheton æt hærgtrafum
wigweorþunga, wordum bædon,
þæt him gastbona geoce gefremede
wiþ þeodþreaum.

(Bwf, 175-8)

At times they made vows at heathen temples of sacrifices to idols, prayed with words that the slayer of souls would give them help against the calamity of the people.

The Beowulf poet describes with some pathos the ineffectual attempts of the heathens to free themselves from the attacks of Grendel by praying to idols and taking counsel among themselves. Because they did not know the Lord, the Judge of Deeds, the Lord God, ne hie huru heofena Helm herian ne cuþon, / wuldres Waldend 'they did not know indeed how to praise the glorious Ruler' (Bwf, 180-3). The contrast between those who must send forth their souls into the embrace of the fire, having no expectation of comfort, and the one who may seek the Father's bosom after death would arouse thankful joy in the hearts of Christian hearers. It would also remind them of the futility of praying to the slayer of souls (that is, any idol) to save them from another slayer of souls, Grendel, the þeodþreaum 'distress of the people' whose connection with hell and evil is well established. Satan's kingdom is not divided against itself (cf. Luke 11:18).

14. See Appendix A; the Hands of Supplication.

15. Prayer expresses the desire of the Beatitude "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied" (R.S.V., Mt 5:6).

16. Desperation in prayer is not to be confused with the sin of despair. To become desperate in this sense is to cease to hope in all human endeavours and powers and to seek God's help in earnest, with all one's heart and mind and strength. This single-mindedness and determination carries the seeker through the necessary humbling and death to self which will bring him into the presence of God and the joy of answered prayer. Such persistence is evidence of true faith and love for God. The Epistle of James describes the prayer of hungering and thirsting: "Be wretched and mourn and weep . . . . Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will exalt you (Js 4: 9-10). (cf. Also the parables Luke 18:1-8, the widow and the unrighteous judge, and Luke 11:5-10, the knocking at midnight, are to encourage the disciples "always to pray and not to lose heart" (Lk 18:1).

17. Possibly a careless or unlettered scribe copying the Latin text made this error rather than the Anglo-Saxon versifier, who, however, did make other errors (cf. Kenneth and Celia Sisam, The Paris Psalter, p.17).

18. Daniélou, The Bible and the Liturgy, pp.132-3.

19. The word "hands" in this instance is peculiar to the Vulgate version and the Old English which was based on it. The Greek also has χειρας 'hands', but the Authorized version, the N.E.B. and the other modern translations read "feet"; washing the feet in the blood of the wicked signified overrunning them in battle in celebrative tones. The Hebrew word used was $p^{ec}\bar{a}m\bar{a}yw$ 'his feet' (Hebrew Text 58:11) from the noun pa'am and the pronoun "his". This is a rare poetic word. The Greek and Syriac translators supposed an emended reading $kap\bar{a}yw$ 'his hands', substituting the noun kap (F. Zorell, Lexicon Hebraicum: Veteris Testamenti (Roma, n.d.)). (I am indebted to Dr. Ben Meyer for these transliterations and reference.) The extremity of the arm, namely the hand, is the primary meaning given for kap; it can also mean the extremity of the leg, the foot, particularly the sole of the foot.

20. The word handa is in the genitive plural case, although we should expect dative or accusative. This makes the sentence ambiguous and it is not clear whose hands are involved. In the Latin, sicut sagittae in manu potentis, it is straightforward in identifying the hand as the strong man's, but there is no reference to sharpening. This the poet must have added in his confusion over the meaning of excussorum. The hands in the O.E. version, then, could be those of the strong man, or of any craftsman or even, since there is no noun, of God.

21. In the preceding verse, "they" are identified as þa halgan on wuldre 'the saints in glory' (Ps 149:5). With the swords they wrecan þenceað wraðum cynnum 'expect to wreak revenge on the hostile races' and bind their kings with isene bendas 'iron bonds' (vv. 7, 8). The Second Epistle to the Corinthians speaks of the authority of the saints to do so: "Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, matters pertaining to this life!" (II Cor. 6:2-3). St. Paul, reprimanding the Christians at Corinth for not exercising their spiritual powers of right judgment in their own affairs, refers here to their role as co-judges with Christ at the final judgment, which Psalm 149 celebrates.

22. The miracles of Moses are famous: water from a dry stone, dividing the waters, etc. Aaron functions as Moses's partner in many of these visible signs of God's power. At the beginning of their mission to deliver the people, God identifies the roles they shall

have: Aaron is to be a mouthpiece for Moses who will be as God to him (cf. Ex. 4:16). Aaron speaks and performs signs before the Israelites to convince them that Moses has been sent by God (Ex. 4:30). Later, when the congregation of Israel rebels and is punished by means of a plague, Moses instructs his partner to go and make an atonement for the people. Aaron does so, then stands between the dead and the living (the position of an intercessor) and the plague is stopped (Num. 16:41-50).

23. Exodus 17:11-12.

24. In the Last Judgment scene, the righteous are to be found at the right hand of Christ (Mt. 25:31-6), the position of favour. In the Old Testament, Jacob in blessing the sons of Joseph deliberately places his right hand on the younger one's head although Joseph expects that the elder son should receive the higher blessing which the right hand imparts (Gen. 48:14-20).

25. Elliott van Kirk Dobbie, ed., The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems (New York, 1942), p.89. This is psalm 50 according to the Old English psalter numbering, but 51 in the Authorized Version. The first verse of this psalm is line 32 in this poem.

26. The Benedictine Office stresses the importance of the crucifixion. For example, the reflection on the sixth hour reminds the praying Christian that "On midne dæg we sculon God herian
> forðam to middes dæges Crist wæs on rode aðened and us ealle ða þurh his ðrowunge mid his deorwyrðan blode gebohte of deofles anwealde and of ecan deaðe. And ðy we sculon on ðone timan to Criste beon georne clypigende and hine herigende þæt we mid þam geswytelian bæt we gemyndige beon þære myclan mildheortnysse þe he on mancynne geworhte þa ða he let hine sylfne syllan to cwale for mancynnes ðearfe. (p.97).

Similarly, the meditation on dawn alludes to the Israelites passing through the Red Sea and the resurrection of Christ with His leading forth of the captives from hell (the "harrowing of hell") as great events for which man should be praising God. The writer cites a psalm addressing God as min fultum 'my helper' and interprets it: "Crist is ealles mancynnes fultum and ealles middaneardes helpend" (p.82). Christ is the helper of the whole earth and all mankind through his death and resurrection which defeats Satan and sets man free from the bondage of sin through baptism, which is the meaning of the reference to the Red Sea.

27. The stress is on the activity of God in human affairs rather than on the results of the work of His hands in Creation (expressed in the term handgeweorc). The modern versions omit "hands" and say simply "deeds" (N.E.B., Ps 92:4) or "all that thou has done" (Moffat).

28. The Old English of this verse follows the Latin leva manus tuas (Ps 74:3), but all modern versions consulted read "feet" (See footnote #19 for a discussion of another example of this peculiarity.). The N.E.B. suggests the reading "thy steps". Whether God steps in to take control or moves events with His hand is not important. Both "hands" and "feet" are anthropomorphic, concrete expressions for the hidden reality of God's intervention in the affairs of men by His Spirit. Daniélou cites one of the more poetic patristic readings of this type of statement: "As early as Irenaeus, the hands of God mean the Son and the Spirit, instruments of the Father in the work of creation and redemption" (The Bible and the Liturgy, p.253). This idea is highly suggestive, and, if known to occur in Anglo-Saxon exegetical writing, could help to explain why the hands of God appear so often in poetry.

29. The compound word used to render fidelia (Ps 111:8), treowfæste, combines treowe 'true, faithful, trustworthy', with fæst 'firm, fixed, secure, steadfast'. In the Old and New Testaments alike, truth is bound up in a Person, who is conceived to be absolutely reliable and unwavering, without a "shadow of turning" (Is 1:17); therefore He and His promises are worthy of buoyant, confident trust. Moffat translates from the original, "standing on a firm foundation" (Ps 111:7).

THE GRIP OF POWER

The Hand in Beowulf

In Beowulf the picture of the Anglo-Saxon world-view formed through collecting and categorizing the references to hands does not have the same balance as in the Psalter. In this poem the overwhelming majority of references is to the hands of warriors, while the hand of God, as such, does not appear at all. However, the hand of man engaged in a battle for life and for good may be understood to represent the will of God on the scene, as Wealhbeow's prayers of thanksgiving to the Deity for sending the hero Beowulf to their aid suggest.[1] The demonic will expresses itself in evil actions of men such as fratricide and murders, few of which, however, include references to hands. Principally, the will to kill, destroy and make captives of human beings operates through the sub-human creatures Grendel and his mother (demonic perversions of mankind) and through the dragon. These beings exert a powerful disruptive force against the essentially spiritual values of the dryht society which are expressed through the fitting use of material goods and through the correct observance of ancient social customs. For example, treasure must never be hoarded but distributed freely as an outflow of generosity; weapons must not be perverted from their right purpose of protection against enemies and turned against a brother or even not used

when they should be; words must never be emptied of meaning by the failure to carry out a promised action. Upon these values the fragile peace and dream 'joy' of the mead-hall depend; against them come cosmic evils, the angenga 'walker alone', the anti-social killer, and the fyr-draca 'fire-dragon', the hoarder of gold whose hot breath burns house, land, and man, including Beowulf himself. He is the champion of moral and social good who confronts these forces in crucial and highly symbolic battles.

As demonstrated in Chapter One, the basis for this conflict is the Creation which took place through the hand of God. Although the Beowulf poet does not specifically mention the divine hand in this context, we can see that the image was very common from Creation-passages in other O.E. poetry. There it is often the hand of Christ, making both mankind and the world, reflecting the strength of the belief in His oneness with the Fæder and suggesting that the word by which God the Father brought heaven and earth into being is the incarnate Word, the Son. The Christ poet appeals to Crist nergende 'Christ the Saviour': Læf us ecne gefean 'grant us eternal joy' so that þa þu geworhtes ær hondum þinum 'those whom thou formerly madest with thy hands' might praise thee (157-62).[2] Christ also made the earth; the stone anlicnes engelcynna 'likeness of the angel race'[3] which becomes animated at the command of Christ and by his power[4] rebukes the unbelievers with this statement:

> Ge mon cigað
> godes ece bearn, þone þe grund ond sund,
> heofon ond eorðan ond hreo wægas,
> salte sæstreamas ond swegl uppe
> amearcode mundum sinum.[5]

> You call God's eternal Son a man, Him who
> defined with His hands land and sea,
> heaven and earth and rough waves, salt
> sea-currents and the sky above.

The One who rodor ahof / ond gefæstnode, folmum sinum / worhte ond wreðede 'raised up and established, wrought and supported the heavens with His hands'[6] in Andreas, in Beowulf also eorðan worhte . . . ond gefrætwade foldan sceatas 'wrought the earth . . . and adorned the regions of the land' (92-96). These verbs worhte and gefrætwade imply the hand of the Craftsman in the work, just as the latter word does further on in the poem when Heorot, which is a sort of microcosm of the creation, is folmum gefrætwod 'adorned by the hands'[7] of many wera ond wifa 'men and women' (992-3) after the bench-shattering conflict of the night before.

The human hand shares in the creative power of the divine, and its works form part of the background fabric of the poem. The golden banner, hondwundra mæst / gelocen leoðocræftum 'the greatest of wonders made by hand, woven with limb-skill' (2767-9) is evidence of the skill of human hands[8] and suggestive of the wonder and mystery of the act of creating. The frequent mention of wunden gold 'twisted or bound gold' (1193,3134) also implies the agency of the creating human hand, which beats gold plates and polishes armour (2255-7): corslets are hondum gebroden 'woven by hands' (1443) and heard hond-locen 'firmly interlocked by hand' (322). But the exercise of cræft is not always for a good purpose. Grendel's glof 'glove' is

sid ond syllic searobendum fæst;
sio wæs orðoncum eall gegyrwed
deofles cræftum ond dracan fellum.

(2086-8)

wide and wondrous, made fast with
cunning clasps; it was skilfully all
made ready by the power of the devil
and with dragon skins.

Here the wonder of creativity is perverted by the demonic will which made and uses the object. The poet does not say specifically that Grendel made this himself; his hands usually perform destructive acts rather than making anything. He himself is a piece of creation, perverted by his own evil will which intends to put Beowulf, unsynnige 'innocent', into this item of craftsmanship.

The human hand which creates is also capable of acts of care and gentleness. The benevolent hand is a very minor theme in Beowulf, in which there is no parallel to the picture in Christ and Satan of Christ who welcomes the blessed at the Last Judgment and gesenað mid his swiðran hond 'makes the sign of blessing [to them] with His right hand' (614).[9] Wiglaf's casting water mid handa 'with his hands' upon his wounded winedrihten 'friendly lord' acts as an 'exceptionally good thane' (þegn ungemete till, 2720-2). The thane who bears the ale-cup on handa 'in his hands' (495) and the hands that receive cups from Hygd (1983) are living out the ritual rhythms of courtesy. These hands, together with that of Æschere which distributed gifts (1344) represent good, benign exercises of human powers for the benefit of others. But

in Beowulf the theme of destruction and evil continually supersedes this even as death overcomes life at the end of the poem. Hrothgar lamentingly informs the hero of Æschere's death after the resurgence of the evil in Grendel's mother: "nu seo hand ligeð, / se þe eow welhwylcra wilna dohte" 'the hand lies dead which responded generously to every one of your desires' (1343-4). It is not only a man who has died, but also the flow of the vitally important generosity which is the bond of the social order has been checked, now that the hand which was the instrument of the gift-dispensing lies dead.[10]

The protective power of the hand is meant to shield the good and the kindly which are part of the treasured hall-joys of men, the ale-pouring and gift-giving society which is so vulnerable to attacks both from within and from without. Benevolent purpose must go hand in hand with defensive actions, as words and expressions used in this poem demonstrate. Beowulf receives the kingdom of the Geats; the brade rice on hand gehwearf 'the broad kingdom came into his hand' and he ruled it well for fifty winters (2205-7). On hand implies both possession and protection; Beowulf is Wedra helm 'the protector of the Weders' (2705), which is the proper function of the dryhten 'lord'. When he fears he may die in the mere, Beowulf asks Hrothgar to take over this function for him and become a mundbora 'protector'[11] for his thanes (1480) who are his hondgesellum 'close comrades' (1481). Both components of the word suggest the mutually protective relationship between lord and thanes: hond means both that they are at the lord's side, near at hand in his battles, and also that they

fight for him with their hands; gesella means sharer of the sele 'hall'[12] which the lord provides for his companions so that they can be close to him. The poet uses a similar word hondgesteallan 'hand-comrades' to emphasize by ironic contrast the negative example of those thanes who failed to protect their prince in his need:

> Nealles him on heape handgesteallan,
> æðelinga bearn ymbe gestodon
> hildecystum, ac hy on holt bugon,
> ealdre burgan.
>
> (2596-9)
>
> Not at all did his hand-comrades, sons of chieftains, stand about him in a troop with battle-valour; but they shrank back into the woods, protected their lives.

It is their own lives which they defend, not lifting hand or sword on behalf of their lord and friend, which is not to fulfil their function as the word hand-comrade identifies it, and as the gifts they formerly received make morally right. This failure to act is as much an attack, coming from within, on the spiritual and moral foundations of their society as the fire spewing forth from the dragon or the nocturnal depredations of the cannibal Grendel, which come from without.

Names as well as epithets can be significant poetically. Among the handscole 'band' or 'shoal' of warriors ready at the hand of Beowulf (1317) is a man called Hondscioh. This name is a cognate of the German word handschuh 'glove',[13] and is suggestive of his role of protecting his lord's hand, and by extension, the man himself. Therefore it is interesting that it is this one named Hand-Shoe whom Grendel devours in his attack on Heorot occupied by the Geats. Hondscioh

becomes a concrete symbol of the fact that his lord goes into the fight without any protection in the shape of thane or weapon and conquers the monster with his bare hands. Yet in a sense Hand-Shoe has protected his lord, since the manner of his death revealed to Beowulf the enemy's method of attack and thus helped him to meet the assault on himself and to fight successfully. In this episode a kind of exchange takes place: Grendel eats Beowulf's Glove, but this loss contributes to the victory by which Beowulf escapes being put into Grendel's glove.[14]

Since the notion of protection properly belongs to some good to be protected, it follows logically that the office of the hand as protector receives an amusing ironic twist when it is mentioned on the side of evil. When Grendel fled from the hall, he his folme forlet / to lifwraþe last weardian, / earm ond eaxle 'he left his hand, arm and shoulder, behind as a life-protection to guard his tracks' (970-2). This metaphorical rearguard is, of course, only his own dead appendage, only a passive rather than an active protector. It sounds like a wry joke, since although leaving the arm behind has enabled him to escape from Beowulf, it has left him defenceless and also mortally wounded. Grendel must die although he does not actually collapse in the hall: to lose the fighting arm and hand is essentially death. The poet uses the image of purchase or ransom with the same tongue-in-cheek tone: no þær ænige swa þeah / feasceaft guma frofre gebohte 'yet the destitute man nevertheless did not buy any compensation there' (972-3).[15] This jesting is the froth on

the ale of triumph: the evil one has been disarmed and the good is victorious, thus preserving the mead-hall society at least temporarily.

The hand takes an active part in protection in two ways. One way is through the works it creates; the hand of the craftsman provides protection for the warrior in battle. For example, Beowulf's _licsyrce_ 'body-shirt' or 'corslet', which was _heard hondlocen_ 'firmly linked by hand', _helpe gefremede_ 'gave aid' (550-1) even in under-sea combat. The other way is the hand of the warrior himself wielding weapons. In _Andreas_, the spiritual battle of the apostles is represented by the metaphor of earthly fighting: _þonne rond ond hond / on herefelda helm ealgodon, / on meotudwange_ 'then shield and hand on the war-field defended the helmet, in the plain of doom' (9-11).[16] Some of the battles in Beowulf have a spiritual dimension, but there is also a lot of fighting between human beings with ordinary weapons, some of which is defensive in purpose. Without its strong king, whose renown alone was enough to keep enemies from attacking, Geatland will be exposed to the danger of invasion after Beowulf's death:

> Forðon sceal gar wesan
> monig morgenceald mundum bewunden,
> hafen on handa . . . .
>
> (3021-3)
>
> Therefore many a spear, cold in the morning, must be enclosed with fingers, lifted in hands . . . .

The double mention of hands in this passage is an effective portrayal of preparedness for battle. The nervous grasp on the spear[17] in the early hours of dawn, waiting for the attack; the lifting of the weapon in the hand, on the alert to cast it at the enemy who has just been

sighted evoke the sense of beseiged defenders of the homeland. Thus the hand is the principle instrument of defence, expressing the protective urge of its owner through its plying of the implements of war.

The moral aspects of defensive battle are important in Beowulf, and enter into the way in which the word "hand" is used. Sometimes the hand almost seems to act of its own volition. When Wiglaf sees that his lord is in distress, his desire to help him is expressed in these terms: he could not hold back, his hond rond gefeng, / geolwe linde, gomel swyrd geteah 'his hand grasped the shield, the yellow linden-wood, drew the old sword' (2609-10). Here the hand reveals the young man's readiness for battle and thus serves as an objectification of a will obedient to the concept of loyalty which was the foundation of the dryht society. A clearly demarcated shift from concrete, physical defensive fighting to the spiritual or cosmic level of warfare occurs when Hroðgar hands over this ðryþærn 'mighty house' of the Danes into Beowulf's keeping. The old king says that he has never entrusted it to anyone else "siþðan ic hond ond rond hebban mihte" 'since I was able to lift hand and shield (655-7),[18] but now he must give place to the divinely-sent champion who is able to fight without weapons, since the enemy is not of a kind that can be injured by swords:

> ænig ofer eorþan þone scynscaðan
> guðbilla nan irenna cyst
> ac he sigewæpnum gretan nolde;
> ecga gehwylcre. forsworen hæfde,
>
> (801-5)

Not any of the choicest swords on earth, no

> war-spear would pierce the sinful enemy;
> but he had made useless by a spell victorious
> swords, each edge.[19]

Thus Beowulf's fight without ordinary weapons is a symbol of the moral and spiritual dimension of the struggle against a personified anti-social force, the murderous, rebellious, solitary spirit on weres wæstmum 'in the shape of a man' (1352). In a culture dependent on close bonds of kinship, mead-hall fellowship and mutual respect and love, any manifestation of this destructive force is disastrous, since it comes from within and cannot therefore be driven off by force of arms. The poet makes clear that the remedy is in a sense spiritual, since the wæccendne wer 'watching man' (1268)[20]

> . . . gemunde mægenes strenge,
> gimfæste gife, ðe him God sealde,
> on him to Anwaldan are gelyfde,
> frofre and fultum; ðy he þone feond ofercwom,
> gehnægde helle gast.
>
> (1270-4)

> . . . was mindful of the strength of his might, the
> ample gift which God gave him, and he
> trusted in the One Ruler for favour, for relief
> and aid; by that he overcame the foe,
> laid low the spirit of hell.

The enemy, the life to be protected, and the grace of God are all expressed in terms of flesh and bones like those which make up the hand, the particular part of the body through which the conflicting powers come to grips.

Victory, even in self-defence, involves killing, and the power of the hand is even more insisted upon here both in language and in actions. The word handbona 'slayer with the hand' occurs several

times. Sometimes the killer may have a weapon in his hand; Ecglaf most probably did have one when he became the handbona of Heaþolaf (460).[21] In Beowulf, however, the principal assailants most often accomplish the deed without weapons: Grendel's mother who fights by gripping[22] becomes the handbonan of Æschere (1330). Other compound words focus the attention on the human hand despite the multiplicity of weapons in the more ordinary battles. It is men who clash in the hondræs hæleða 'the hand-rush of heroes' (2072). Hrunting, Unferth's sword, ðolode ær fela / hondgemota 'formerly endured many hand-meetings' (1525-6), an expression which suggests that battles are meetings in which hands represent the real strength of men, rather than swords which are only extensions of their power. Hrunting had never failed in battle for manna ænig þara þe hit mid mundum bewand 'any man who grasped it with his hands' and who dared to go to battles (1460-3) against more ordinary foes than Grendel's mother, against whose hide it can do nothing. No weapon, such as the mægenwudu 'wood of might' or 'spear' which the coast-guard shakes in his mundum 'hands' (236) has any might of its own, despite the name; its power lies in the hand that wields it. In The Battle of Maldon, one warrior forlet . . . daroð of handa / fleogan of folman 'let a spear fly from his hands, from his palms' so that it pierces through the prince (149-51).[23] The driving force this man exerts is stressed by the repetition of "hand". As in Grendel's case, a fighting man without his hand is already defeated, as Byrhtnoð is when his arm is amyrde 'destroyed'; symbolically the magnificent sword falls to the ground

useless, although its owner is still alive at this point (165-8).[24]

Since it is the hand of the warrior which actually wins or loses, at times weapons are ignored even when they are used. Beowulf reports, "heaþoræs fornam / mihtig meredeor þurh minne hand" 'the rush of battle took off the mighty sea-beast by my hand' (555-8); according to the previous lines the hand did contain a sword, although the hero does not mention it here. His hand is mightier than any weapon, save the gigantic sword which God provides for him in the underwater cave.[25] Other blades do not fare so well in his fingers, however; Beowulf's hond ne sweng ofteah 'hand did not hold back from the blow' (1520) but se beadoleoma 'the battle-light', Hrunting, bitan nolde / aldre sceþðan 'would not bite, injure life' (1523-4). When Nægling breaks on the dragon's head the poet says:

> Him þæt gifeðe ne wæs,
> þæt him irenna ecge mihton
> helpan æt hilde; wæs sio hond to strong . . . .
>
> (2683-5)
>
> It was not granted to him that the edge of swords might help him in battle; his hand was too strong . . . .

In both cases, the enemy is a spiritual as well as physical monster. Viewed in the light of this moral dimension it is logical that a normal sword cannot kill motiveless hatred or the fires of greed. The one is overcome by the intervention of the rodera Rædend 'the Ruler of the heavens' (1555) in the shape of an extraordinary blade, the other by Wiglaf's faithfulness which gives Beowulf a chance to make a comeback and finish off the monster with a knife. This slaying is called

hildfruman hondgeweorc 'the war-chief's handiwork' (2835). Beowulf's prowess as a handbona is best represented in the fight with Dæghrefn:

> ne wæs ecg bona,
> ac him hildegrap heortan wylmas
> banhus gebræc.
>
> (2506-8)
>
> nor was a sword the slayer, but the battlegrip crushed the whelmings of the heart, broke the bone-house.[26]

The word hildegrap places Beowulf in a category outside ordinary human fighters in the poem, for words such as grap, along with folm and finger, most often apply to the evil monsters.

Bosworth-Toller lists the word mundgrip as occurring only in Beowulf, which is appropriate in view of the distinctive emphasis in this poem on the power of clutching hands which are symbolic of the incorporeal forces behind events. Beowulf's mundgripe, maran 'greater' than any other man's (753), arouses the response of fear in Grendel, who, as the poet emphasizes, wishes to flee (754-5). This is the definitive demonic reaction to determined, divinely-strengthened resistance.[27] The poet makes it clear that the fight will be a titanic one by assigning to them equivalent prowess in past exploits. To match the thirty thanes Grendel has taken (123), Beowulf is said to have the strength of thirty men in his hand-grip (mundgrip, 380).[28] However, in this battle, Grendel's wicked strength is spent entirely in the attempt to escape, spurred by the instinctive recognition that behind Beowulf is the favour and power of the Almighty ruler:

wigspeda gewiofu,
frofor ond fultum,
þurh anes cræft
selfes mihtum.
þæt mihtig God
weold wideferhð.
Ac him Dryhten forgeaf
Wedera leodum
þæt hi feond heora
ealle ofercomon,
Soð is gecyðed,
manna cynnes

(696-702)

But to him the Lord gave good fortune of success in war, for the people of the Weders comfort and help, so that they should completely overcome their foe through the strength of one man, by his own might. The truth is made known, that mighty God has always ruled mankind.

The poet uses verbs as well as compounds with "hand" to express the exceptional gripping strength of the hero's hand. The verb fon suggests sudden clutching: Gefeng þa be eaxle . . . / Guð-Geata leod Grendeles modor 'the leader of the war-Geats then seized Grendel's dam by the shoulder' (1537-8). The intensive prefix for of the verb grapian stresses the lethal might of his grasp: Beowulf æt guðe forgrap Grendeles mægum, / laðan cynnes 'in war killed with his grip the race of Grendel, the hated kin' (2353). Thus the diction of the poem reflects the importance of the central figure's conflicts and the power which comes into play through his hand.

The metaphor of fetters (clomm 'fetter, chain, prison') suggests how invincible Beowulf's hand-grip is, as if it were the iron bands locked onto the flesh of Grendel's paw. Hroðgar reminds the warrior of his triumph over the monster which he killed (cwealdest) "þurh hæstne had heardum clammum" 'by violence with stern bonds' (1335). Beowulf himself speaks as if his effort were a partial failure:

Ic hine hrædlice heardan clammum
on wælbedde wriþan þohte,
þæt he for mundgripe minum scolde
licgean lifbysig, butan his lic swice . . . . .

(963-6)

I thought to bind him quickly in a bed of slaughter with hard clasps, so that because of my hand-grip he would have to lie struggling for life, unless his body should get away . . . .

The Lord, Beowulf goes on, allowed Grendel's body to escape, but in the hero's explanation the fact still remains that Grendel could not break Beowulf's hand-grip, which the poet emphasizes by repeating the fact of his strong grip in the compound word and the fetter image used here. Grendel could escape only by leaving his own hand behind, fast in hard bonds, and as we have seen, a warrior without his hand is powerless, already defeated. The maimed Grendel who flees, however, is still in another sense trapped in bonds as a result of Beowulf's unbreakable grip, expressed in a striking metaphor: hyne sar hafaðˇ / in nidgripe nearwe befongen, / balwon bendum . . . 'pain had seized him closely in its coercive grip, with deadly fetters . . .' (975-7). A fetter image appears once in connection with evil beings, but with a markedly different effect. The action of Grendel's mother is described in terms stressing horror rather than strength: Grap þa togeanes, guðˇrinc gefeng / atolan clommum 'she groped out then against him, seized the warrior with dread clasps' (1501-2). The replacement of heardum by atolan changes the display of manual power from the admirable to the hateful, emphasized by laþan fingrum 'hateful

fingers' (1505). Although Beowulf initially still trusts in his powerful hand-grip (1533-4), he wins the struggle under the mere in the end through the non-metaphorical iron of the ancient sword, also a gift of God.

The hands of the evil beings act in ways that are perversions of the human and the good. The words hond and mund are basically human-sounding, appropriate for Beowulf but seldom applied to Grendel or his mother who are parodies of human beings. The words folm and grap generally occur in descriptions of them. Translators use modern English words with animal connotations; for example, in line 836, Gordon translates Grendeles grape as 'the claw of Grendel'.[29] The extraordinary power in Grendel's touch, at which duru sona onarn / fyrbendum fæst, syþðan he hire folmum æthran 'the door, made fast with fire-hardened bands, opened at once after he touched it with his hands' (721-2) is a complete reversal of the meaning of an analogous phrase in Andreas: Duru sona onarn / þurh handhrine haliges gastes 'the door opened at once through the hand-touch of the Holy Spirit' (999-1000).[30] Here the power of God opens a prison door, and the result is release and healing for the captives within. In Beowulf, the door-opening is a prelude to a demonic inversion of this purpose: the monster's intention is to kill and devour those inside. This parallel reinforces the impression of the curious corporeality of the conflict between opposing spiritual forces in Beowulf. When the devils rush upon Andreas with gifrum grapum 'greedy clutches' (1335),[31] he, in contrast to Beowulf, fights his battle totally by faith in the

protection of God. He overcomes them not by returning hostile grips but by the sign of the cross on his countenance, at the sight of which the fiends are afraid and take to flight, (1337-40)[32] just as Grendel wishes to do. But Beowulf is not a Christian saint; he is the defender of a pre-Christian society beset by a kind of evil which disrupts its peace and is the antithesis of kinship and all social bonds. Thus Beowulf can promise Hroðgar to free his people from the embodiment of this evil by doing battle with and defeating the cannibal Grendel, or fall feondgrapum fæst 'locked in the foe's clutches' (636) if he fails in the attempt.

In the violent conflict between the good and evil powers, the fighting methods of both are ironically so similar that Beowulf and Grendel almost become alike. Grendel grapode gearofolm 'grasped with ready hand',[33] and Beowulf, who had observed the manner of his færgripum 'sudden grips' (732-3), onfeng hraþe / inwitþancum ond wið earm gesæt 'quickly seized [Grendel's hand] with hostile purpose and sat up propped against his arm' (748-9). The opponents become hand gemæne 'locked hand in hand'[34] (2137), as Beowulf desired in making this boast: "ic mid grape sceal / fon wið feonde ond ymb feorh sacan, / lað wið laþum" 'I shall with my grip grapple with the enemy and fight for life,[35] hostile one against hostile one' (438-9). Both are angry (769 . and both are lað 'hostile, hateful', a word usually reserved for the evil antagonist: wæs gehwæþer oðrum / lifigende lað 'each while living was hateful to the other' (814-5). However,

Beowulf though entangled with evil remains clearly distinguishable from it. The poet reminds us that Grendel is fag wiđ God 'hostile to God' (811), while Beowulf, in addition to having God's favour, has intelligence governing his hands, as the words higeþihtigne 'the strong-minded one' (746) and inwitþancum 'hostile purpose' or 'deceitful thought' (749) imply.

The hand may be referred to in describing the condition of victim or captive through the actions of a conqueror. If the victim is innocent, the hands that bind him are exerting their strength in a destructive, perverse direction. The ultimate example is the crucifixion, in which the Victim is totally guiltless. In the Christ poem, the poet alludes to this event through a metaphor in the Last Judgment scene. Christ condemns all those who have lightly cast away the grace given to them by means of the cross, as if addressing each one individually:

> Ge þu þone lichoman be ic alysde me
> feondum of fæđme, ond þa him firene forbead,
> scyldwyrcende scondum gewemdest.
> For hwon ahenge þu mec hefgor on þinra honda rode
> þonne ic iu hongade? Hwæt, me þeos heardra þynceđ!
>
> (1484-88)[36]

> Moreover, the body which I freed for myself from the embrace of foes and forbade it to sin, thou hast shamefully stained by working of crimes. Why dost thou hang me on the cross of thy hands heavier than long ago I hung?

Here the hands of the unfaithful committing evil deeds (sins) represent their disobedient will; they are willum biscyrede / engla dreames

'wilfully cut off from the joy of the angels' (1519-20).[37] The same evil will which directed the hands of the executioners at the original Calvary[38] governs those who fall away from the holy calling, "crucify the Son of God on their own account",[39] and consequently turn their hands to do evil. The passage from the Christ poem is a telescoping of many spiritual stages: the former state of sinful man in the grasp of foes in hell (1493); their salvation brought about through the crucifixion; their apostasy and return to sin; their return in the poetic present to the state of thraldom under the demonic powers, represented in the Psalms by the hands of the wicked making prisoners of the righteous.[40] But in the Christ poem the freed captives forgot their earlier imprisonment and by taking on the role of captors or oppressors in the metaphor of again crucifying Christ with their sinning, they are again reduced to bondage.

Sometimes in the interplay of the twin themes of captor and victim, the hand of the latter, and therefore the victim himself, is the focus of attention. In Andreas, when þam halgan þær handa gebundon 'they bound there the hands of the holy one' (1222),[41] the reader or listener is concerned for the saint rather than his tormentors. In the Thryth episode in Beowulf, after the mundgripe 'seizure by hands, arrest' (1933) of the supposed offender who had done nothing, wælbende . . . handgewribene 'deadly bonds . . . woven by hand' (1936-7) were waiting for him. Here, a perverse will utilizes an article made by the hands of a craftsman to fetter an innocent person. In both of these cases the bound hands of the captive suggest the loss of

the means of self defence, the free use of his hands. Another variation on the impairment of the hand of the victim occurs in the dragon episode in which Wiglaf's hand is burned (sio hand gebarn, 2697), when he tries to aid his lord beyond his strength; the injury to his hand represents his lesser power, of which a warrior's hand is symbolic. Wiglaf cannot kill the worm, but succeeds partially, however, in that the fire begins to lessen (2701-2). Hondscioh is another of the poem's innocent victims; the fact that Grendel eats the feet and hands (745) stresses the helplessness of the slæpendne rinc 'sleeping man' (741) who never had the opportunity to use them to defend himself. Only Beowulf, whose hands never appear in the victim-role, has the might to make effective resistance against the evil, sub-human enemy who has superhuman powers.

This evil being becomes a victim also as Beowulf hine . . . hæfde be honda 'had him by the hands (813-4), and Grendel wiste his fingra geweald / on grames grapum 'knew the power of his fingers [to be] in the grip of the foe' (764-5). The brief flashes of Grendel's point of view ironically almost make him seem like an innocent victim and make Beowulf seem like the foe instead of the protagonist. That Grendel flees is unimportant; the hand, the locus of power, remains in Heorot as a trophy, a tacen sweotol 'clear sign' (833) of victory. Not only the hand, but also earm ond eaxle — þær wæs eal geador / Grendeles grape 'the arm and shoulder — there it was all together, the gripping part of Grendel' (834-6). Set up against the gold roof of the hall (926-7) it is a symbol and evidence of evil conquered but

ironically still present though dead, and soon to break out again. The diction of the description of this trophy conveys a strong sense of the malevolent might of evil in this hellish perversion of a human hand:

> hand sceawedon,
> feondes fingras; foran æghwylc wæs,
> stiðra nægla gehwylc style gelicost,
> hæðenes handsporu hilderinces
> eglu unheoru . . . .
>
> (983-7)

> . . . they gazed on the hand, the
> fiend's fingers; the end of each one,
> each of the nails, was most like steel;
> the claw (hand-spur) of the heathen
> warrior was horrible, monstrous . . . .

Not only horrible and inhuman, but also huge and strong, it is a silent witness to the power of this besetting evil of the kinship-based society,[42] and to the greater strength of Beowulf. No sword, however ærgod 'good from of old' (989), could carry off that giant war-hand; the only steel in this battle was the finger-nails of Grendel.

Though the solid corporeal nature of Grendel is stressed, the fact that he cannot be injured by swords, his gigantic size, his descent from Cain, the first fratricide, his hostility to God, and his connection with hell and darkness make it clear that he is not only a physical but also a spiritual enemy. Thus when divine intervention in the coming of the hero Beowulf brings about his physical death, we know that this is a temporary victory; continual vigilance is necessary against this evil. After the day of celebration with the captured

weapon of the evil one in their possession as booty, the Danes discover that, along with their beloved Æschere, the avenging mother has taken the cuþe folme 'the well-known hand' (1303). The evidence of victory is gone and with it the sense of triumph. Then, as so often in the regular rhythm of sorrow after joy in Old English poetry, cearu wæs geniwod 'care was renewed' (1303).

Thus we see that in Beowulf hands are both instruments of the will and concrete symbols of spiritual realities behind their actions. The many different functions of the hand in the poem, creating, protecting, fighting, grasping and killing, being bound or torn from the body, all represent the struggles on the level of middle-earth between the forces of good and evil. The hand-motif, which occurs principally in the main story line, the confrontation between the hero and three monsters, helps to focus attention on the meaning of these battles as emblematic of this struggle. Beowulf's participation in the war is on the side of good: his hand is the instrument of God to quell a representative of the powers of hell and death who entrap and carry off human beings of God's creation just as Grendel carries off (in his glof) and devours the men of Heorot which is a microcosm of creation. Thus it may be seen that the men who act disruptively against the values of the dryht, such as faithfulness (which the cowardly thanes deny in the dragon episode), generosity (which Heremod in his pride ceases to practise) and courtesy (such as Unferth's uninformed mockery of Beowulf's aquatic exploit), ally themselves with darkness and evil in so doing. In the farther view, such manifestations of evil, the

pride, the greed, murder, jealousy and the other sins of the rebellious human spirit are expressions of the demonic will, the true enemy of the joys of men. It may well have been in the back of the poet's mind, and it would certainly occur to any Christian listener or reader that all these, in fact, are the monstrous enemies of peace among men and that they cannot be overcome by metal sword or mighty hand-grip but by faith in and obedience to the will of the God who has always ruled mankind.

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

1. Fr. Klæber, ed., Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg (Boston, 1950), p.24, cf. 11.623-8. All further quotations from Beowulf are from this edition and will be identified by line numbers in the text. The translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

2. George Philip Krapp and Elliott van Kirk Dobbie, eds., The Exeter Book (New York, 1936), p.7. See also p.41 where Christ reminds sinners that He made them with His hands from dust (1375-85). The creation of mankind by God's hand is an idea which becomes important in the Genesis poem (see Chapter 3, below), through the use of the compound word handgeweorc 'handiwork'.

3. From the poem Andreas, line 717, found in George Philip Krapp, ed., The Vercelli Book (New York, 1932), p.23.

4. cf. Luke 19:30. Christ tells critical Pharisees that if people did not acclaim Him in the triumphal entry into Jerusalem the very stones would cry out. Perhaps this ancient story of the stone speaking is an allusion to the statement in Luke.

5. Krapp, ed., The Vercelli Book, p.23, 11.746-50.

6. Ibid., p.17, 521-3.

7. Juxtaposed to the beadufolm 'battle hand' (990) of Grendel, this unusual employment of the word folm with a creative connotation brings out the contrast between the adornment of the hall as a restoration of peace in the social order and the destruction and murders enacted by the anti-human creature using the same organ, the hand (folm).

8. Other objects in this poem are named using compounds containing the word wunder which indicates the skill of the craftsman's hands: wunderfatum 'wonderful vessel' (1162), wundorsmiþa geweorc 'work of the smith who makes wonderful things' (1681). The word leoðocræft 'limb-skill' includes the hand and arm; in the psalms, it has been noted, the whole limb is sometimes mentioned for the purpose of emphasis. It is also easy to see how an artisan working with metals would need to use his limbs energetically to beat and shape the gold or other substance, not just using the hand with its five fingers.

9. George Philip Krapp, ed., The Junius Manuscript (New York, 1931), p.155.

10. The death of Æschere in this sense may be more important in the poem than hitherto recognized. The stilling of the gift-giving hand thus prefigures the coming of the dragon, who symbolizes concretely the opposite of the quality of generosity: greed and hoarding of gold. In this way the third cosmic evil of the poem, the dragon, is directly connected to the previous one, Grendel's mother.

11. See Introduction, pp.2,4. Mund is combined with beran 'to bear, carry'. It seems to imply the use of hands in defence. However, this word is also applied to the dragon in describing the wyrm as defender of the hoard (2779), either ironically or because the word loses its connotation of a defender with hands.

12. Klæber, Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg, p.358.

13. Ibid., p.431. Klæber lists an analogous Old Norse name Vottr, also meaning "glove". The literal translation of handschuh is hand-shoe, a covering for the hand seen as parallel to that for the foot.

14. Grendel's glof 'glove' has been interpreted as one of the hell-symbols of the poem; there, but for the grace of God (his strength) Beowulf had gone, an innocent victim.

15. The same legal language concerning weregild and payment is used earlier in the poem, describing the attitudes of the Danes and Grendel. Grendel carries on a singale sæce 'continual feud' with them:

> sibbe ne wolde
> wið manna hwone mægenes Deniga,
> feorhbealo feorran, fea þingian,
> ne þær nænig witena wenan þorfte
> beorhtre bote banan folmum . . . .
>
> (154-8)

> he would not have peace with any man of the Danish kin, nor remove the life-evil, nor settle for a fee, nor did any of the counsellors have reason to expect a brighter compensation from the hands of the slayer.

The only actions they could expect from Grendel's hands would be more killing, since he is implacably hostile. He will not have sibbe, which means both "peace" and "kinship" with them, suggesting total rejection of social bonds. But as a murderer, under

Anglo-Saxon law Grendel would have to pay the weregild for those whom he has slain, such as Hrothgar pays to Beowulf for the latter's thane Hondscioh who dies in his hall, although Hrothgar is not the murderer. Grendel is truly a lawless spirit (cf.1 Tim.1:9). In the light of this situation, the inversion involved in the ironic suggestion that Grendel is attempting to pay his way out is all the more likely to be humorous.

16. The Vercelli Book, p.2.

17. This defensive posture occurs elsewhere in Beowulf. When Grendel's mother attacks Heorot, swords and shields are handa fæst 'firm in hands' in response to her surprise raid.

18. This formula hond ond rond occurs everywhere and it has a resonant quality due to internal rhyme. It is also effective in a description of defensive warfare since the hand, the warriors' primary instrument of defence, lifts the round shield, a protective piece of fighting equipment.

19. An alternative translation is "he [Beowulf] had sworn off all swords". Forsworen means to "swear away" to which Klæber adds in his glossary "make useless by means of a spell". R. K. Gordon takes the more direct meaning and translates: "but Beowulf had given up victorious weapons", a logical enough statement following the fact that no swords could pierce the monster though Beowulf's thanes sought to aid their leader. I have followed Klæber because the change of subject from Grendel to Beowulf and back again in the following sentence seems unnecessarily abrupt and confusing (although possible in Old English).

20. This expression suggests a spiritual as well as physical watchfulness; it goes back ultimately to the New Testament (e.g. Mk 14:38). Beowulf could be likened to a soldier of Christ on the watch against evil spirits, the geosceaftgasta 'fated spirits' of which Grendel is one (1266).

21. The dragon is not a handbona but just a bona 'slayer' (2834). A wyrm, of course, does not have hands: that creature's power is expressed in breathing fire. In this way the diction reflects a sense of the power and activity of the hand where appropriate. Another reference to a slaying by the hand (2835) is the killing of the dragon for which Beowulf used a seax 'knife'.

22. In the description of Grendel's mother carrying off Æschere, the poet uses the verb befon 'to seize, encompass, encircle' which clearly designates the use of hands (and arms): anne hæfde / fæste befangen 'she had seized one firmly' (1294-5). See Introduc-

tion, p.4, on the use of feng and gripe and their related verbs.

23. W. F. Bolton, An Old English Anthology (London, 1965), p.52.

24. Ibid.

25. In this curiously-worded passage, the ancient sword almost has the character of a hand as it heard grapode 'gripped hard' and broke the bone-rings (1565-7). The verb grapian means "to touch, to feel with the hands" and the same combination of a grip-word and breaking bones occurs in the description of the fight with Dæghrefn (see text, below).

26. The stress on the physical in this description, the feel of the pulse and the cracking of breaking bones, is even greater in the account of the deaths of the first two monsters. It seems that the more demonic and non-human the enemy is, the more palpable is the feel of the body. The intenser realism is also proportionate to the greater importance in the poem of Grendel.

27. cf. James 4:7.

28. Beowulf later in the poem kills thirty thanes, and swims away with their armour after the battle in which Hygelac is killed. Thus Grendel and Beowulf collect an equal number of "scalps" in these numerical statements.

29. R. K. Gordon, trans., Anglo-Saxon Poetry, p.18. See also Introduction, p.3.

30. Krapp, ed., The Vercelli Book, p.30. I accept the editorial emendation of the MS reading han hrine because of the association of the verb hrinan 'to touch' with hands, and because of the parallel structure which the one poet may have borrowed from the other. Likewise in the associated Beowulf passage the reading æthran involves some editorial guessing, but most of the scholars cited in Klæber's edition agree on some form of the basic verb hrinan.

31. From Andreas in The Vercelli Book, p.40.

32. Ibid.

33. Grendel's hand is mentioned twice in the passage 11.745-50: mid handa and mid folma.

34. E. Talbot Donaldson, Beowulf: A New Prose Translation (New York, 1966), p.37. Gemæne has the implication of 'shared', 'mutual', 'in common'.

35. As in Donaldson's translation, p.8.

36. The Exeter Book, p.44.

37. Ibid., p.45.

38. See Introduction, p.3, for a poetic account of the crucifixion involving hands. In his great sermon on the day of Pentecost, Peter tells the people that "by the hands of lawless men" they crucified their messiah (R.S.V., Acts 2:23).

39. Hebrews 6:6. See also Heb. 10:26-29.

40. See Chapter One, pp.10-13.

41. The Vercelli Book, p.37.

42. The sermon of Hrothgar carries the suggestion that the sin of pride is the root of this evil. He describes how Heremod, great and powerful, became evil and joyless, stopped giving out rings, killed his table-companions and was a long evil to his people. Pride, the overhygda dæl 'great deal of pride' (1740) which leaves a man unsatisfied, covetous and vulnerable to the suggestions of the wergan gastes 'evil spirit' (1747), grows within a human edition of Grendel: Heremod ana hwearf, / mære þeoden mondreamum from 'departed alone from the joys of men' (1714-15) after killing his eaxlgesteallan 'shoulder-companions' (1714). All such people, including those who are later to rise up and destroy Heorot, embody the same evil which directs Grendel, and which must be killed every time it crops up. It cannot be done away with once and for all in this world.

FREE WILL AND THE HEAVENLY THRONES

> "I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life . . . ."
>
> (Deut. 30:19)

In the Old English Genesis, there are almost fifty references to hands. These fall into a structural pattern which helps in finding the principal thrust of this long, involved and annotated biblical paraphrase. For the purposes of this study, the section known as Genesis B will be considered as one with the rest of the poem, since one copyist at any rate saw fit to include it as part of the same work. The three categories of hands found in the Psalms are present here also, but in order to arrive at an interpretation of the poem, the instances of the appearance of the hands of God, obedient man, and rebellious man and angel will be discussed according to their place in the whole poem rather than by examining each classification separately.

Tracing the hand-motif uncovers a pattern of events in the Genesis poem that reflects the structure of the doctrines around which it is built. In general, most references to God's hand are in the first half, principally Genesis B (in which only hand, not folm or mund, occurs), stressing His creative power, while in the latter part of the poem there are half a dozen scattered references to God's hand in the context of protector of or victor on behalf of the righteous man.

The hands of men are mentioned in two main sections. From the middle of Genesis B (line 518) up to the account of the flood all references are to human hands performing wicked and disobedient acts; and before men are present on the scene, it is Satan's hand which appears in this role of defying God. After the Fall and leading up to the deluge, every act involving hands is a murder, a sin especially condemned and singled out for prohibition after the waters have subsided (1515-31). After this first reference to the evil potential still residing in the human will which directs the hand, post-diluvian humanity shows, by its many acts of rebellion against its Maker (such as the assault on Lot), that it is still full of wickedness and in need of redemption. This latter part of the poem, however, concentrates on the sole individual whose hands act in faith and submission to God. Abraham's obedience balances the unrighteousness of the human race and through him salvation will come to mankind: God tells him, "in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice" (A.V. Gen. 22:18). Wherever the word "hand" appears, there is a significant action, either performed or intended, and in the purposes of the different owners of these hands we see the unfolding of the poem's great theme: the righteousness of God in judgment, in punishment, and in salvation.

In some sections of the poem there are no references to hands at all. One of these is a major passage of some three hundred lines following line 2172. This, like other hand-less portions, contains more dialogue than narrative and hence few actions. The emphasis here, therefore, is on God's promises to Abraham. The attempt of Sarah to

fulfil one of the promises by natural means (Hagar and the birth of Ismael[1]) only brings a reiteration of the impossible pledge that this barren wife will have a son. Huppé's commentary on this part is very interesting. He points out that the poet condenses the fifteenth chapter of the biblical Genesis rather than elaborating as he does in other places, and that the "effect of the condensation is to emphasize God's repeated promise that Abraham's descendants will be in number like the stars — figuratively, a promise that all the 'blessed and the just', the redeemed, will be the spiritual descendants of Abraham."[2] Huppé, in making this comment, is indebted to Bede, as he is in explaining another of the poet's significant innovations on the biblical text. In lines 1946-59, part of an earlier, long, hand-less section, the poet substitutes for a specific translation of God's promises to Abraham in Genesis 13:14-18[3] a passage of commentary which emphasizes God's care for Abraham, the faithful servant. The reference here to fullwona bearn 'the sons of baptism' (1951)[4] helps reveal the figurative sense of the promise as a prophecy that the seed of Abraham is Christ "whose act of Redemption would be operative for all mankind" thus making Abraham the "father of the faithful" who are a vast multitude. Similarly, according to Bede, the promise of the land represents "the 'kingdom of the heavenly patria'. In short, what God promised to Abraham is the Redemption."[5] In verbally pointing to future fulfilment of promise and prophecy, the portions of the Genesis poem in which hands are not mentioned are a counterpoint to the visible or concrete forms of prophecy in the rest of the poem, the actions of

hands which are types of future events, as well as to those deeds and events which are in themselves significant in salvation history.

The Old English Genesis has an episodic structure which is roughly delineated in the Second Epistle of Peter. It is set forth in an enormous suspended conditional sentence; this rhetorical flourish makes the concluding positive clause an emphatic statement of the theme of the poem and indeed of all Christian literature:

> - For if God did not spare the angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of nether gloom to be kept until the judgment;
> - if he did not spare the ancient world but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven other persons, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;
> - if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction and made them an example to those who were to be ungodly; and
> - if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the licentiousness of the wicked . . . ,
> - then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trial, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority.
>
> (R.S.V., II Pet. 2:4-9)

The apostolic writer here mentions explicitly the fall of the rebellious angels, the destruction in the deluge of the race of Cain, the preservation of Noah's righteous line, the rescue of Lot and the destruction by fire of the wicked in Sodom. These are some of the major episodes in the O.E. Genesis, and others not mentioned here are referred to later in the same epistle. The Creation is connected with judgment by water and fire in a chapter dealing with the scoffing of the disobedient, followers of their own sinful passions (which presupposes the

Fall of man, the only part of the saga not explicitly listed in the second chapter):

> They deliberately ignore this fact, that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago, and an earth formed out of water and by means of water, through which the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist have been stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly sinners.
>
> (II Pet. 3:5-7)

All of these major incidents serve to illustrate the theme that God, the Creator and Judge of mankind, is worthy of the worship and obedience of humanity; those who truly honour God can trust Him to save them, while those who in stubborn pride rebel against His laws deserve destruction.

The main incident-structure of Genesis, beginning with the creation of the invisible or spiritual realms and the sin of the angels, tells the story of the creation and fall of mankind in the Genesis B interpolation which includes a second, more elaborate version of the fall of the angels. Sub-incidents leading up to the next major event (the Flood) illustrate the impiety and immorality of the descendants of Cain who continue in sins which recapitulate the murder of Abel. The righteous line of Seth whose descendants worship God represents the community of the saved and in many cases are also types of Christ; for example, Enoch, who walked with God and was translated directly to heaven, prefigures the Ascension of Christ.[6] All of these are repetitions or variations on the theme of the fallen verses the blessed, and the personages in each incident resemble either the rebellious or the

faithful angels.[7] The second half of the poem echoes all the main stages of the story: the repeat of the Fall in the shame of Noah and the construction of the Tower of Babel, an analogue of the city built by Cain's children. The two rescues of Lot (one from captivity, the other from death by fire) and the journey of Abraham toward the fulfilment of the promises continue the theme of salvation, man's pilgrimage toward the heavenly city. The sub-incidents of these stories also are, as Huppé demonstrates, allegorical warnings of damnation to the faithless (Lot's wife) and allusions to the Saviour who is to come (Melchisedek). The foreshadowing of salvation-history culminates in the birth and sacrifice of Isaac who is the clearest type of the Lamb of God who is to take away the sin of the world through His sacrifice of Himself. The poem ends with Abraham giving thanks to God for ealra þara sælða 'all the prosperity' (or 'happiness') which He had given him siþ and ær 'now and earlier' (2935-6).

The Genesis poem both ends and begins with God. Just as the closing lines portray Abraham giving thanks to God, so the first lines are an exhortation to praise Him:

> Us is riht micel ðæt we rodera weard,
> wereda wuldorcining wordum herigen,
> modum lufien. He is mægna sped,
> heafod ealra heahgesceafta,
> frea ælmihtig.
>
> (1-5)
>
> It is very right for us that we praise with words the Guardian of the Heavens, the Glorious King of Hosts, love [Him] with our hearts. He is abundance of power, Head of all high creations, the Lord Almighty.

This is what the poet, in good Cædmonian style, would inspire his listeners or readers to do through his re-telling of the story of Genesis with the emphasis on God's power, greatness and mercy toward man. After this, the poem moves almost immediately into an account of the revolt of the angels and their consequent ejection from heaven, following a copious tradition based on Hebrews 12:7-8 (the war in heaven and casting out of the Devil) and apocryphal literature. The hand of God appears in this section in judgment on the rebels, defeating them in actions which are an unequivocal affirmation of the abundant power mentioned in the lines quoted above. The Christian author naturally sees this destruction of the rebellious angels' joys in heaven as a manifestation of divine righteousness. The High King of heaven honda arærde 'lifted [His] hands' highest against that army (49-51) and besloh synsceaþan 'struck down the evildoers' (55). The lifted hand is both the symbol and the instrument of divine justice; it is by a mighty act that the Deity halts and crushes the delinquents and restores the peace and unity of heaven. Judgment, therefore, is a reason to praise the Creator who expresses His love for the first creation (the spiritual kingdoms) by eradicating evildoers and returning it to its former perfection, and who purposes to heal the lower creation (earth) when it falls also through judgment.

The victory of holiness is accomplished in strikingly physical terms:

Hæfde styrne mod,
gegremed grymme, grap on wraðe
faum folmum, and him on fæðm gebræc . . . .

(60-62)

He had fiercely roused his stern mind, seized upon his foes with hostile hands, and broke them in his embrace . . . .

Here God is the æðele 'prince, noble one' (63) who gebolgen wearð 'became angry' (55) and overcame His foes with an enormous bear-hug like a Germanic "berserk" warrior.[8] The suggestion of bestial fury seems incongruous in a description of God, but it is standard behaviour for belligerents in the Anglo-Saxon tribal culture and occurs in other battle passages in Old English poetry; for example, it is clear from the verbs gebolgen 'angered' and styrmde 'stormed, shouted' that Beowulf is angry as he challenges the dragon (Beowulf, 2550-2). To the modern reader in a gun-toting world anger is foolish since an angry man cannot shoot straight while he who is calm and calculating will win, but in a world where fighting meant direct physical contact with hand or weapon, the carefully-cultivated anger was an advantage, a help in unleashing the strength in a man's body, especially the shoulders, arms and hands which deal out blows. In this passage describing God, the verb grap emphasizes the power exercised through gripping hands, and fæðm 'embrace' extends the image to include the arms. This extended hand image embodies the absolute might of the heavenly æðele, and the abstract qualities of justice and holiness, in a representation of the wrath of God which makes the unseen visible in terms that the Germanic mind understood to mean princely fighting prowess in a noble hero.

The total defeat of the rebels and their expulsion from heaven leaving empty thrones is given as the reason for the creation of earth. The poem describes God considering how to establish again the greater creation (heaven) with a selran werode 'better host', and planning to establish earth and water, though as yet there is nothing in the darkness (92-104). The necessity of completeness and goodness and perfection in God's works is further evidence of His glory and wisdom, and is another reason to praise Him as the Creator of all

Having affirmed God's power and righteousness, the poet moves into an account of the six days of creation, an account which unfortunately is incomplete due to a gap in the manuscript. The part that is preserved, however, consistently repeats with doctrinal exactitude the tenet that þeos woruldgesceaft / þurh word gewearð wuldorcyninges 'this created world came into being by the word of the Glory-King' (110-11). It is very basic to the Christian conception of God that it is through His word that everything came into being (cf. John 1:3); He bebead 'commanded' (125) and light was, and even the naming of day is þurh drihtnes word 'through the Lord's word' (130).[9] This section of the poem corresponds to the first chapter of Genesis in the Bible, which, in a grandiose sweep of all things great and small, presents the creation of the world by divine fiat in six days, and ends on the positive note that "behold, it was very good" (Gen. 1:31). By scrupulously maintaining the creation by the word of God doctrine the poet emphasizes and echoes the theological statement announced in the first chapter of Genesis, the creationist understanding of the material world.

A fundamental principle in Judaeo-Christian thought is that matter is good because a good Creator made and blessed it, and all things from food to marriage are gifts "created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth".[10] The frequent mention of "word" here, and one reference to the Deity's pleasure in the creation (131-2) seem to reflect this article of faith.

The emphasis on the divine power and wisdom in the word and on the unblemished goodness of creation forms a poignant contrast to the following disastrous story of disobedience and rejection of the Creator, through which the whole world became subject to futility and decay.[11] By transposing the creation of Eve from the second chapter (Gen. 2:21-2) to its position in the poem before the blessing and commission to multiply and rule over all the other creatures (Gen. 1:28-30), thus conflating the two accounts, the poet adds intensity to the final vignette. In an echo of Genesis 1:31, scyppend ure 'our creator' (206) looks over his weorca wlite 'his beautiful works' (207), a paradise filled with gifts for the human pair who had at this point bam on breostum byrnende lufu 'in both their breasts a burning love' (91) for their Lord, still the bliðheort cyning 'happy-hearted king' (192). With the pathos of Christian hindsight, the poet warns that as yet there were no clouds bearing rain, dark with wind (212-4), the turbulent weather that is a visible sign of the spiritual disorder which resulted from the Fall, upsetting the very elements. When man fell, the world fell with him, but beyond this anticipated "pathetic fallacy" (sic) is the knowledge that God's plan of salvation includes not only man but also

the whole creation. It is this hope, along with the emphasis on the goodness of what God made perfect in the beginning, that is another inspiration to give praise to the Creator.

The presence or absence of the hand of God in creation is significant in determining the doctrinal focus of a given section of the poem. Although absent from the hexameral portion, this image occurs frequently in Genesis B which follows it. Just as by echoing the language of Genesis 1 the poet emphasizes the main point of that chapter, so in following the more anthropomorphic tradition of Genesis 2 by making brief references or using compound words containing the syllable "hand", the poet-translator suggests one main point brought out in the second chapter: human free will. The freedom of will is crucial in the Fall-event, since it is by his own choice that man slides into sin and rejects God, which extinguishes the flame of love for the Creator that was in his heart. Since the Genesis A poet telescoped the two creation accounts, Genesis B includes only the story of the Fall, with the hand-words inserted as reminders of the creative activity of God. In Genesis 2:7, God forms man out of the dust of the earth, and although the word manus is not used, the verse prompts a mental picture of a sculptor or craftsman who uses his hands to shape the raw material,[12] the clay, into a beautiful form. This form made in God's image also has hands, that is, power to act according to his own will or according to the will of his Maker. The hand image, therefore, suggests a shift of focus from creation per se to man's freedom of choice.

The next series of examples of hands in Genesis suggests delicately both the creative power and the loving purpose of God in making man and giving him freedom to choose. Man would decide for himself whether he would return this love or reject fellowship with his Lord and set up his own standards of right and wrong. The latter alternative arises out of the cupiditas or earthly possessiveness which the church Fathers saw as the essence of sin:[13] hoarding or enjoying God's gifts as an end in themselves instead of loving and enjoying the Giver.

After a break in the manuscript and the commencement of Genesis B with the commandment not to eat of the fruit, the poet calls the human couple God's handgeweorc 'handiwork' (241). Knowing nothing of sorrows, Adam and Eve were dear to God ðenden heo his halige word healdan woldon 'while they were willing to keep his holy word' (245). The compound word handiwork is a reminder of the fact that God created them with His hands. Occurring in the context of their primal innocence and happiness, this concept is juxtaposed with a statement implying both the gift of free will and a hint of future disobedience. At this point there is a flashback to the story of Lucifer's fall, beginning with introductory declaration that the All-Ruler had created þurh handmægen 'by the might of [His] hands' (247) the ten tribes of angels þæm he getruwode wel / þæt hie his giongorscipe fylgian wolden 'in whom he trusted well that they would obey him in discipleship' (249-50). In case the link between created personhood and the gift of free will suggested by this sentence was not clear, the poet stresses it by

immediately repeating the word "hands" and elaborating on the blessing given:

> forþon he him gewit forgeaf
> and mid his handum gesceop, halig drihten.
>
> (250-1)
>
> Therefore he gave them intelligence and
> shaped them with his hands, the Holy Lord.

The angels, therefore, are in the same position as mankind when first created. Having minds, or the capacity to know, both the human and the angel races are aware of the truth about God, that in His goodness and power He is the source of all life and is worthy to receive love, praise, and obedience from His creatures in return.

The constant reiteration of this theme emphasizes the responsibility of freedom and leaves those who turn from the Source of life without excuse. The words drihten and giongorscipe which appear in the lines cited above are reminders of the Anglo-Saxon understanding of this responsibility. The drihten or lord gave gifts to his giongrum 'followers', and they in turn were expected to stand by him loyally in battle, even at the price of their lives. This service was freely given, but if it was withheld the refractory or cowardly thane incurred shame and exile, the same result that disobedient angel and man experienced when shut out of Heaven and Eden respectively. In Germanic society giongorscip 'vassalage' was considered honourable, and the sons of chieftains would be found in that estate. So it was an honourable position that the heofoncyning 'Heavenly King' (237) gave to the angels who were to wyrcean his willan 'do his will' (250), and His later

creation, Adam and Eve, have a similarly glorious status in their relationship with the heavenly drihten. At the beginning of Genesis B, therefore, when God gives them the land to dwell in and cultivate, the human pair are the picture of perfect joy and obedience as they bow their heads in thankful acceptance of His will.

However, the trust is broken, the relationship destroyed, and the disloyal thanes cast into outer darkness. The fate of the insubordinate angels is both a foreshadowing of the downfall of Adam and Eve who are given the same option of disobeying and a warning to the hearer of the dangerous consequences of sin. The Genesis B portrayal of Satan is the image of the sinner: the created person who uses his hands to serve his own ends without reference to the will of his Maker. The angel who nolde god þeowian 'refused to serve God' (264), believing and claiming that he had greater strength and skill than the omnipotent Ruler of the universe, breaks the bond of giongorscip and ends up in the bonds of hell. His preposterous pretension is crystallized in his boast, "Ic mæg mid handum swa fela / wundra gewyrcean" 'I am able with my hands to work as many wonders' (279-80) as God. Significantly, this is not action but the boasting before the achievement: the ranting angel cannot make good his claim and thus falls into the Germanic disgrace of breaking his beot 'vow'.

Satan also falls literally into disgrace: by seeking to overthrow God's authority and set up a mightier throne he has thrown away His grace or favour and thus incurs divine wrath. The drihten whom he refuses to serve in declaring "Ne wille ic leng his geongra wurþan"

'No longer do I want to be his follower' (291) is the allwalda 'All-Ruler' (292), se mihtiga 'the Mighy One' (299). As a just reward for his pride, ællmihtig god 'Almighy God' (311) casts Satan ignominiously off his throne into the place of punishment, a permanent exile from the kingdom he had once enjoyed. The flames of hell are an objective correlative for the hot pride within:

> Weoll him on innan
> hyge ymb his heortan, hat wæs him utan
> wraðlic wite.
>
> (353-5)
>
> Within him pride welled about his heart;
> hot about him was hateful punishment.

Yet Satan, defeated and bound in hell, still claims the greater power and continually repeats the wish that he might have minra handa geweald 'the power of my hands' (368) and that he could ute weorðan 'be out' (369) for even one hour; then with his followers—but the sentence breaks off as if he cannot now even formulate a false boast. His state of being rices leas 'without a kingdom' or 'without power' (372) takes a visible form: his fet synt gebundene, / handa gehæfte 'feet are bound, hands fettered' (379-80) and he is gehæfted be þam healse 'fastened by the neck' (385). The hands (and also the feet) are the parts of the body which carry out a person's will and therefore, although his will is in rebellion Satan cannot act. Further, his being clamped down by the neck graphically suggests the enforced curbing of the still-necked[14] one's pride.

By his own admission Satan is bound and knows that his hope for direct retaliation is idle, but still he blusters about what would

happen "if":

> and þæt wiste eac weroda drihten
> þæt sceolde unc Adame yfele gewurðan[15]
> ymb þæt heofonrice þær ic ahte minra handa geweald.
>
> (386-8)
>
> and that the Lord of Hosts knew also, that trouble
> must arise between Adam and me about that
> heavenly kingdom if I had power over my hands.

In this sentence, a jealous Satan voices his vindictive intention of keeping Adam from possessing his former glorious seat. In nursing his sense of injury he goes to the point of borrowing the words of God's Son to claim a righteousness he has lost, saying that God cannot impute any sin to him[16] (391-2). He announces to his followers that he must gain vengeance gif we æfre mægen 'if ever we can' (398) and gif we hit mægen wihte aþencan 'if we can possibly contrive it' (400). These conditional clauses,[17] repeated in quick succession, underscore Satan's real uncertainty of success and reveal his actual helplessness to act outside of God's plan. In marking out the middle-dwelling and in making man æfter his onlicness 'in his likeness' (396), God purposes to populate with hluttrum saulum 'pure souls' (392) the kingdom recently vacated by Satan and his troops. The only vengeance Satan in his envy can envision is to thwart this plan by gaining Adam and his descendants as his own giongrum . . ., / fira bearn on þissum fæstum clomme 'vassals . . ., the sons of men in this firm bondage' (407-8). In this, however, Satan will have only temporary success, as the poem makes clear through its metaphors of and allusions to the Redemption. The use of the hand-motif shows that his claims to creative power in working wonders and to

military might in battle against God are empty; he is only a creature, not the Creator, and his eternal rebellion only leaves him trapped in his own colossal self-deception and pride. Thus the word hand here signifies not the exercise of power in particular acts but the fact that while Satan has the will to disobey he has no power other than that of deception, and his hands are not mentioned again.

Having established Satan's inability to act against God or man with his hands, that is, by direct attack, the poet changes the terminology to <u>feondes cræfte</u> 'the skill of the enemy' (449). This skill in his vassal demon takes the form of a <u>fæcne hyge</u> 'deceitful mind' (443) and the <u>hyge strangne</u> 'strong mind' (447) by which he cleaves the fire of hell's door on his way to earth. But juxtaposed to the arrival of Satan's destructive emissary is a reminder of the creative power of God through a compound word referring to His act of making man in His image:

> He þa geferde þurh feondes cræfte;
> oðþæt he Adam on eorðrice
> godes handgesceaft gearones funde
> wislice geworht, and his wif somed . . .
>
> (453-6)

> He travelled then by the foe's skill until he
> found ready in the kingdom of earth Adam,
> the hand-creation of God wisely wrought, and
> his wife together.

Here the two opponents meet again under different guises. Satan, represented in a being which does not use hands to act but only the fiendish power to pervert, deceive and lead astray, encounters God, represented in the man He has made with the freedom to act according to divine will or his own. Man, wisely wrought by the life-giving

power of God, has the true knowledge which the Judge of Mankind appointed for his gingran 'followers' so that they would know how to do good (457-9) and thereby avoid falling into captivity in hell and death.

But the Lord who created life also created the tree of life and the tree of death, which

> heah heofoncyning handum gesette
> þæt þær yldo bearn moste on ceosan
> godes and yfeles, gumena æghwilc . . . .
>
> (463-5)
>
> the High King of Heaven planted with his hands
> so that the sons of men must choose, each man,
> [between] good and evil . . . .

The tree of death is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, a symbol of man's freedom to reject his Creator's commandments and set up other versions of right and wrong, without reference to the divine standard of perfection and holiness. The expression "each man" opens up a vista of the whole of human history, a reminder of how all mankind since the beginning has had the same choice and has followed the same disastrous route. However, God's act of giving freedom of will to man is presented through the image of a gardener planting fruit trees carefully by hand. This subtly suggests that His gift of freedom is good, like a fruitful garden, even though it has allowed evil in the world. Because each man moste on ceosan, the responsibility for wicked acts lies within man's own will, and thus the poet affirms the goodness of God.

In his description the poet elaborates on the meaning of each

tree. The tree of life represents eternity of God's favour, but the other tree brings both misery in this life and subjection to Satan afterwards, all of which the dyrne deofles boda 'secret messenger of the devil' (490) knew very well. This explanatory passage comes to a fitting climax in the image of the serpent, a beast without hands or even limbs:

> Wearp hine þa on wyrmes lic and wand him ymbutan
> þone deaðes beam þurh deofles cræft,
> genam þær þæs ofætes and wende hine eft þanon
> þær he wiste handgeweorc heofoncyninges.
>
> (491-4)

> He changed himself then into the body of a serpent, and wound himself about the tree of death through devilish skill, took the fruit and wended his way again from thence to where he knew the Heaven-King's handiwork was.

We easily imagine the devil-snake coiling about the tree as if it were a visible counterpart of the demonic deception coiling about God's still-innocent but free creatures to snatch the coveted fruit of their wills and obedience. They are, as the poet again reminds us, God's handiwork, whom the evil one wishes to pluck from the kingdom of heaven by misleading them into the same errors and sins as himself. This juxtaposing of the product of God's creative act to the machinations of Satan's envy helps to build up dramatic tension and pathos before the messenger's first onslaught.

When the three levels of will, divine, human, and demonic, meet and wrestle, the human hand appears on the scene for the first time. Represented in creation itself is the divine will that man should continue to love and serve the Maker of Life and Provider of all good gifts.

The demonic will is the opposite extreme, seeking to claim the actions of men's hands for itself, thus giving Satan the instrument of power he had lost through being bound in hell. And the human will is free and capable of both loyalty and disobedience. In his first attempt, which is a direct confrontation with Adam, the devil tells the man to læste . . . georne 'follow eagerly' (517) the messenger of God which he claims to be. Satan's servant, in saying that God "Nele þa earfeðu / sylfa habban" 'did not wish to have the hardship himself' (513-4) of making the journey to earth, makes implications about Him which a knowledgeable person would find simply ridiculous. He suggests that the Creator is lethargic and unconcerned about his creatures, although the unfallen Adam and the Christian reader or hearer know that God is love and that He enjoys and seeks the fellowship of His creatures, as well as having the tirelessness of infinite power. Small wonder, then, that Adam rebukes the false messenger, telling him that he can understand nothing of his words or his behaviour and that he has never seen any messenger from God like him. In Scripture, however, the serpent begins with Eve and there is no parallel for this preliminary temptation of Adam. It is a homiletic interpolation which celebrates the fact that God is good and the rightness of continuing firm in allegiance to Him, and also demonstrates the principle that a man who knows and loves the truth about God will easily discern and reject the enemy's lies.

The fiend attempts to persuade Adam to use his hand, that is, to act, outside the permission of God. He invites him to nim þe þis ofæt on hand 'take this fruit for yourself in [your] hand' (518) and to

bite and taste it, on the grounds that it comes from God to make Adam stronger in mind and fairer in body, an appeal to pride and vanity. If he were to do this he would become a slave to, and his hand would be an instrument of, Satan's will. Adam, however, has a sound understanding of God in his head and both feet planted firmly on the ground: he on eorðan stod 'he stood on the earth' (522) as one not about to be swept into folly by any such enticements to disobey his Maker. This phrase captures nicely a sense of creatureliness and corporeality.[18] The fact that Adam was of eorðan geworht 'made from earth' (365) is one of the reasons the spiritual being Satan gives for hating him and resenting his destiny of inheriting the heavenly thrones (418-27) which he himself lost through pride. The first Adam, like Christ who is called the second Adam,[19] counters the devil and overcomes the temptation by the word of God. He repeats what the Lord of Victory said to him while he stood in that very place, and clinches his argument with a forthright statement of his faith:

> Ic hæbbe me fæstne geleafan
> up to þam ælmihtegan gode þe me mid his earmum worhte,
> her mid handum sinum. He mæg me of his hean rice
> geofian mid goda gehwilcum, þeah he his gingran ne sende.
>
> (543-6)

> I have for myself a firm faith in the Almighty God who made me with his arms, with his hands, here. He is able from his high kingdom to give me every good thing, though he send not his servant.

In his mention of both arms and hands of the Creator, Adam stresses the love and power God expressed in forming him rather than parading his own faithfulness in refusing to let his own hands do what he knows to

be wrong. In this way he places himself in God's will and acknowledges Him as Lord, affirming His generosity and omnipotence in the following sentence. By his obedience to the truth that he knows, the man gives due honour to his Maker, and creation remains unsullied. Thus a close look at the use of the hand-motif in this passage shows how by honour and praise rightly returned to the Almighty through trustful obedience man leaves himself and the flow of events in the hands of the Creator, instead of attempting to take life into his own hands.

Subsequently, however, as the poet returns to the traditional account, the performance of human beings is uninspiring. The same interlocking forces and motifs occur; here they are appropriately in reverse order, corresponding to the fall of man into disobedience in contrast to the didactic digression which presents his triumph over sin. The passage concerning Eve does not actually mention hands, but it begins with a reminder that she is sceone gesceapene 'brightly formed' (549), an allusion to her creation by the shaping hand of God. Then follows the trickery of the enemy and her disobedient act, which involved the use of her hands as later lines make clear. The Fall of Eve concludes with the demon's instructions to her regarding Adam.

The messenger assaults Eve, first with flattery, calling her idesa seo betste 'best of ladies' (578) just as he had praised Adam for his words and deeds (507-8), then with the same kind of false logic and transparent lies that he had used against her husband, with the additional device of playing upon her concern for Adam. As if quoting God Himself, the messenger of Satan threatens Eve with divine anger if

she will not comply, and promises to forhele 'hide' from incrum herran 'your Lord' the fact that Adam spoke so much harm to him (579-80). He protests that he knows so well what heaven is like in a tone which implies that he still lives there but continues in the past tense: wæs seo hwil þæs lang / þæt ic geornlice gode þegnode / þurh holdne hyge 'so long was the time that I served God with a loyal mind' (584-6). This emissary of the father of lies promises to give her gifts of seeing farther over the earth and into heaven itself. Eve, having been assigned a wacran hige 'weaker mind' (590) misses the warning clues both small and great. The devil's use of the dual forms is very revealing to the reader although Eve is oblivious to their meaning. At one moment he combines himself with Eve in a conspiratorial wit 'we two' (574), united in the common cause of getting Adam to disobey the Creator, and in the next he puts Adam and Eve together as gyt 'you two' (576), the babes in the woods whom he is protecting from incrum herran 'your Lord', also the dual form. This suggests that in this patronizing sentence the fallen angel is disguising his loss of the right to say ure drihten 'our Lord'. Further, his speech contains gross theological absurdities, such as the promise to conceal something from the all-knowing, all-seeing Deity. Therefore Eve, who in traditional exegesis represents the weakness of the flesh, eats the fruit and breaks the commandment.

The hand appears in the crucial event of the temptation of Adam, who represents reason. This was considered the highest gift, the quality by which man was set apart from the animals, and when reason

becomes subject to the will of the flesh, the senses,[20] divine order is subverted and man has fallen from what he was created to be. The poet, in describing Eve as she goes to tempt Adam, brings out the pathos and irony in the situation by means of an allusion to creation: the woman who was the fairest to come into the world forþon heo wæs handgeweorc heofoncyninges 'because she was the work of the Heaven-King's hands' (627-8) has been forlæd mid ligenum 'led astray by lies' (630). Through the creature made in the image of God now flows the lying and deception which is the devil's particular power instead of the will of her Maker. Her hands have become Satan's instruments and her will is in subjection to his through the working of this power. Her spiritual condition and her allegiance given to another master take a visible form in her approach to Adam:

> Sum heo hire on handum bær, sum hire æt heortan læg,
> æppel unsælga, þone hire ær forbead
> drihtna drihten, deaðbeames ofet . . . .
>
> (636-8)

> One she bore in her hands, one lay at her heart,
> the cursed apple, which the Lord of Hosts formerly
> forbade to her, the fruit of the tree of death . . . .

Eve has in her hand the sign of her intended act of persuading Adam to disobey God, and in her heart lies the false counsel and misplaced trust which is guiding her. So moved is she by the excitement of her new experience that she seems to have forgotten the original commandment. She describes her vision of heaven to her spouse in glowing terms which are evidence of how completely deceived she is by þæs laðes lean 'the gift of the hateful one' (601), but the words she uses betray the fact

that she does not actually see God but only hwær he sylf siteð 'where He Himself sits' (667).[21] She calls the messenger of the Devil godes engel god 'God's good angel' (657), and assures Adam that this personage will forgive him for his rash speech gif wit him geongordom / læstan willað 'if we two will follow him in vassalage' (662-3). Her speech is full of lies and contradictions, evidence of its source in the kingdom of darkness. The promise of forgiveness is arrant falsehood and is inconsistent with the character of the unyielding Enemy. If this truly were an angel from God, he would forbid them to honour him and insist that worship may be offered only to God.[22] This basic imperative is known to Adam as well as to the Christian author and audience, since it was Adam who had walked with God in the Garden of Eden.

Initially, Adam saw through these specious arguments with the same clarity as he did in the first temptation and hence resisted for a long time. But Eve spræc him þicce to 'spoke very often to him' (684) and finally his mind began to

> hweorfan, bæt he þam gehate getruwode
> þe him þæt wif wordum sægde.
>
> (706-7)
>
> turn, so that he trusted in the promise which
> the woman spoke to him in words.

When Adam's mind swerves from truth, reason is overthrown and the Fall of humanity can now take place. Man succumbs to the power of deceptive words through which Satan has gained his victory, and also to the sensual appeal of the medium through whom they come. Her hands now proffer the fatal fruit, her second act of Satanic disobedience, as she

invites Adam to partake:

> "Nu hæbbe ic his her on handa, herra se goda;
> gife ic hit þe georne. Ic gelyfe þæt hit from gode come
> broht from his bysene, þæs me þes boda sægde
> wærum[23] wordum."
>
> (678-81)

> "Now I have it here in my hand, my good lord; I give it to thee eagerly. I believe that it comes from God, brought at his command, as this messenger told me with true words.

By this act the handweorc godes 'handiwork of God' (702) is a help to the hellsceaða 'harmer from hell' (694) in bringing about the downfall of Adam.[24] In making this reference to the hand of God which created her just after the account of her disobedience, the poet reminds his audience of who she and her husband are despite what has happened. They are, according to the divine promise, the destined heirs with all their descendants of Satan's erstwhile kingdom, created to take the rebel angel's place even though they have apparently just forfeited their inheritance. And thus even here there is a subtle reminder of the creative power of God, whose purpose Satan can never thwart even through attempting to pervert His creatures.

In the context of the disaster of joy and happiness lost, the hand of God appears once more as a signal of this hope to be fulfilled. Up until this point, the human hand has been instrumental in bringing death. Adam receives from his wife's hand helle and hinnsið 'hell and a journey hence' (718), although hit ofetes noman agan sceolde 'it had to have the name of fruit' (719). The fruit is a kind of demonic parody of transubstantiation, as from the hand of a priest of

Satan Adam receives death-giving food. The false messenger rejoices swa hit him on innan com, / hran æt heortan 'as it came into him, touched his heart' (723-4). This fruit entering his body is a concrete symbol of the fact that Adam is now in the same bondage to Satan as Eve, at whose heart the fruit lay, the sign of her wrong allegiance. But while representing the messenger gloating over the success of his mission to induce mankind to forsake their Maker and thus give Him modsorg 'sorrow in heart' (755), the poet reminds us that God cast the rebellious angels into hell

> and mid handum his eft on heofonrice
> rihte rodorstolas and þæt rice forgeaf
> monna cynne.
>
> (748-50)
>
> and with his hands again set up in heaven
> the celestial thrones and gave that kingdom
> to mankind.

Thus the hand of God in its function of restoring the heavenly creation enters the poem in a representation of the divine intention for earth, just before the human couple's lamentations about their fall and their prayer for mercy with which Genesis B ends. The poet repeats the promised gift of "that kingdom to mankind" as if to set the stage again for the drama of redemption. Since the kingdom of heaven has been prepared for mankind, and since we know that God will fulfil His purpose, this appearance of God's hand helps to prepare the reader for the rest of the poem which will demonstrate that the "rejoicing at wrong" on the part of Satan, who is still bound in hell, will be short-lived.

But for the time being Satan has triumphed over man, and the next part of the poem shows the results of this for Adam and his descendants. Correspondingly, with one doubtful exception the hands mentioned are those of rebellious man, principally engaged in murdering his fellows. Even the first instance, which occurs in the section wherein the guilty pair come face to face with their Maker for the first time after their Fall, is a report of a kind of murder.[25] As Adam is making his famous excuse to God in the O.E. Genesis he says: Me ða blæda on hand bryd gesealde 'the woman gave me the fruit in her hand' (883). As noted above, this is Eve's second disobedient act which brings death to Adam. The sentence could also be read as "the woman gave me the fruit into my hand"; by thus shifting the emphasis to Adam's sin from Eve's by naming his hand, we could read his statement as an unwitting confession of his own guilt in committing what amounts to spiritual suicide. The following lines of the poem which include the judgment and the three-fold curse serve to emphasize the fact that it was this act of disloyalty which brought death to mankind.

In introducing the tale of their descendants, the poet begins as it were a whole new section which is to elaborate on the theme of the sorrow that results from the Fall:

> Hwæt, we nu gehyraðˇ hwær us hearmstafas
> wraðˇe onwocan and woruldyrmðˇo.
>
> (939-40)
>
> Lo, we now have heard from where tribulation
> and earthly wretchedness grievously arose.

The beginning of this worldly sorrow is expressed in concrete terms:

the telling dramatic event of their expulsion from Paradise into a sorgfulre 'more distressing' (961) and unspedigran 'poorer, less fertile' (962) land than the one from which they were driven needs little elaboration. All within a few lines Adam and Eve are cast out of Eden, their two sons are born, and immediately the first flesh-and-blood murder takes place:

> folmum gefremede, þa unræden
> broðor sinne, freomæg ofsloh,
> Cain Abeles. and his blod ageat,
>
> (982-5)
>
> He performed the ill-advised act with his hands,
> killed his kinsman, his brother, and Cain
> poured out Abel's blood.

The hand-motif points to this fratricide as the first significant act after the Fall. In the Anglo-Saxon society based on kinship it was presumably easy to understand the enormity of the first recorded crime. The story of Cain and Abel, therefore, has a certain poignancy in this context, arising from the familiarity of a people whose ancestral tradition demanded personal vengeance with the disastrous effects of brother-slaying, and from the cumulative style: kinship words (freomæg, broðor) and words describing blood (swate, blod, and cwealmdreore 'slaughter-gore' (984-6) occur in clusters. This empathy breaks out as the passage culminates in a response typical of Germanic hearts:[26]

Æfter wælswenge wea wæs aræred 'after the slaughter-blow, grief was raised up" (987).

Thrice more in connection with the First Murder the word "hand" appears. One instance is found in the speech by which God confronts

the guilty and evasive Cain with the evidence:

> Hwæt, befealdest þu folmum þinum
> wraðum on wælbedd wærfæstne rinc,
> broðor þinne, and his blod to me
> cleopað and ciged.
>
> (1010-3)
>
> Behold, thou hast covered up with thy hostile hands in a slaughter-bed the faithful warrior, your brother, and his blood calls and cries out to me.

According to an extra-biblical tradition, Cain was at great pains, though unsuccessfully, to hide the body as an expression of his guilt. Attempting to conceal him with wraðum folmum[27] is like a further attempt to murder the already-dead Abel by removing from sight the body, the evidence that he once existed. But in these legends the earth refuses to co-operate and the body does not remain hidden.[28] The third example of Cain's hand[29] occurs in the pronouncing of the curse: God tells him that the earth will no longer give him its fruits. Because heo wældreore swealh / halge of handum þinum 'it swallowed holy slaughter-gore at your hands' (1016-7), we can see that the act he committed against his brother is also an attack on the broader creation, the earth itself which supports life. And thus Cain becomes an exile, driven from his God, his kinsmen, and his home, and estranged even from the very ground he walks on. Because he fears death, God sets a tacen 'sign, mark' on him, the sign of sevenfold wracu 'vengeance', the wite æfter weorce 'punishment after the deed' which will come upon the man who mundum sinum 'with his hand' takes the life of Cain (1040-3). This fourth reference is to the hand of another murderer, as yet

unknown, reflecting the ongoing and ever-widening current of sin, violence and death as the human race lives out its chosen bondage to Satan.

Following the murder of Abel section is an account of the progeny of both Cain and Seth, the son of Adam born to take Abel's place. The three occurrences of our signal-word in this portion of the poem all involve the descendants of Cain. As mentioned in the Old Testament (Gen. 4:20-22), it was the tribe of Cain which began such practices as raising cattle, playing the harp and manufacturing in brass and iron. In the strict Augustinian tradition these are activities of this world when they are enjoyed as an end in themselves instead of merely used in the process of attaining the true end of enjoying God.[30] However, the tone of the Anglo-Saxon poet's mention of the hand of the harpist is sufficiently ambiguous that he may be expressing a positive reverence for the contribution of "Iabal" who

> þurh gleawne geþanc
> herbuendra hearpan ærest
> handum sinum hlyn awehte
> swinsigende sweg, sunu Lameches.
>
> (1078-80)

> through wise thought first of earth-dwellers
> awoke with his hand the sound of the harp,
> the melodious-sounding harmony, the son
> of Lamech.

The diction and tone bring to mind the joy of the banquet-scenes of Beowulf, in which evocative words like hlyn and sweg occur frequently. The expression gleawne geþanc 'wise thought' suggests approbation, and herbuendra which means literally 'here-dwellers' might also suggest the

poet's sympathetic identification with music-lovers. Yet as we have seen in Chapter 2, the worldly joy in Beowulf is always of very brief duration and sorrow follows soon after; further, the whole poem ends on a note of grief and futility. With the death of the hero the future is bleak and the useless treasure can only be buried. There are also scattered references to the Christian heaven as a better alternative, such as the reference to the benefit of seeking the Fæder fæþmum 'embrace of the Father' (Beowulf, 188) instead of having to go in fyres fæþm 'into the embrace of the fire' (185). Therefore the short-lived joy of harp and mead-hall is not likely to be favourably viewed by the Christian poet of Genesis who expects eternal joy in heaven, and whose avowed purpose is to render praise to God for that hope and to inspire others to do likewise. Thus, the possible alternative way of reading the passage is unlikely, and the effect is to show the worldly indulgence of the generation of Cain[31] which is the cause of their destruction in the Flood.

The other two uses of "hand" in this section are in a confession of a murder, which the poet connects directly to the first slaying. Lamech tells his wives:

> Ic on morðor ofsloh minra sumne
> hildemaga; honda gewemde
> on Caines cwealme mine,
> fylde mid folmum fæder Enoses,
> ordbanan Abeles, eorðan sealde
> wældreor weres.
>
> (1093-8)

> I in injury have struck one of my near kinsmen, I have stained my hand in Cain's death; I struck down with my palm the father of Enos, the slayer of Abel, gave to the earth the slaughter-gore of a man.

The diction is reminiscent of the earlier murder passages and again the word folm appears. The mention of Cain by name, the allusion to the killing of Abel, and the double reference to hands all suggest that this is an important event with allegorical implications. The original account in the Old Testament gives no name for the victim who is described as an adolescentulum 'young man, youth' (Gen. 4:23). Although Cain is Lamech's great-great-great grandfather, the Patristic exegetes ignored the age and took this statement to mean that the descendant killed his marked ancestor. This use of tradition argues that the poet intends that his audience should think of the symbolic meaning which is found in the "books" such as the writings of the Fathers.[32] The sevenfold vengeance for the slayer of Cain is "a prophecy of the destruction of the impious progeny in the seventh generation from Adam",[33] which is when the Flood occurs.

The descendants of Seth, initially holy and in God's favour, are in the beginning like the faithful angels, forming a sharp contrast to the sons of Cain whose deeds ally them with the devils. The poet gives a great deal of space to describing the exemplars of Seth's line, particularly to the antithesis of Lamech, Enoch, who "represents the peace of the elect in heaven".[34] Eventually, however, sin infects the whole human race: descendants of Seth take wives from among the daughters of Cain, and these bear the gigantmæcgas, gode unleofe 'giant's sons,

hateful to God' (1268). According to Christian tradition, this represented men falling in love with worldly society, an unholy attachment which gives birth to the sin of pride.[35] Now that even the people of Seth who were holy have followed in the steps of the rebellious angels, the rodera waldend 'Ruler of Heaven' (1253) has had His fill of the doings of men. In the poem He laments that in addition to the sins of the cneorisn Caines 'race of Cain' (1256), who me . . . hafaŏ . . . sare abolgen 'have made me sorely angry' (1256-7), the sons of Seth me . . . torn niwiaŏ 'renew indignation in me' (1257-8) by their choice of mægeŏ to gemæccum 'maidens as marriage-partners' (1259). Therefore, because all men do evil and are womma ŏriste 'thirsty for sins' (1272), and in order to wipe out the wickedness which has caused this kin to be disinherited and lose the heavenly thrones, God must destroy them and wash the earth clean again by means of a great flood. Death and punishment now seem to be the inevitable final word for the human race which was created to rule all creation, a justly-deserved reward for their rejection of the good Giver of all their blessings.

However, because of the faithfulness of the Creator who purposed to give the heavenly kingdom to mankind, a remnant of the faithful is to be saved out of the general destruction. In the next breath after announcing the flood, the poet introduces Noah, a good man who is nergende leof, swiŏe gesælig 'dear to the Saviour, very blessed' (1285-6). He is one of the types or foreshadowings of the Salvation which is to come, and it is noteworthy that the word nergend

'saviour' occurs several times in this section as an epithet for God who is acting to fulfil His plan for mankind. The Lord instructs Noah to build the ark, which is the means by which he is saved from destruction. This merehus micel 'great sea-house' (1303) or micle merecieste 'large sea-chest' (1317) is a symbol of the church which now saves the faithful; the poet's inclusion of an extrabiblical detail, that is, the wondrous strength of the ark which increases as the waves become rougher, is evidence of his reliance on this allegorization which is derived from commentaries. Bede explains that the rising waves of tribulation compel the Church to seek the joys of the other life more earnestly, just as the waters raise the ark toward the heavens in the literal sense.[36] The waters of the flood, like the Red Sea, also represent the waters of baptism through which the faithful have died to the world and are raised to newness of life in Christ (cf. Rom.6:3-11). Noah, the faithful one, co-operates with God's will by doing as he is commanded but the others continue, like Satan and the rebellious angels, to reject God's mercy by refusing to pay any attention to Noah's warning of a coming reðe wite 'harsh punishment' (1319). By this the poet continues to underline the holiness and goodness of God who provides the way of salvation, calling men to live by leaving sin, and warning them of the consequences of their disobedience and wickedness. Most of mankind deliberately chooses to continue in sin, although one man and his household respond to the Saviour. In this way the poet lays the two alternatives before his audience, implying that the responsibility for choosing damnation rests on them, and at the same time

sets forth the righteousness of God in order to inspire the response of love, obedience, and praise in human beings who are His creatures.

God's sending of the flood as part of His salvation becomes focussed on one particular incident through its repetition and by the appearance of the divine hand:

> Him on hoh beleac heofonrices weard
> merehuses muð mundum sinum,
> sigora waldend, and segnade
> earce innan agenum spedum
> nergend usser.
>
> (1363-7)
>
> The Heaven-Kingdom's Guardian Himself, the Ruler of Victories, locked the door ("mouth") of the sea-house behind with his hand, and our Saviour with his own power blessed the ark within.

It is God who personally closes the door of the ark,[37] ensuring the safety of the few faithful ones and all the beasts by sealing it against the waters. The word segnade, which actually means "made the sign of the cross" is both an anachronism and an addition to the Vulgate which says simply et inclusit eum 'and shut him in' (Gen. VII: 16). Making the sign of the cross on the forehead at baptism was from the earliest period of the Church's history both a sign of belonging to Christ and a "guarantee of the protection of the Shepherd",[38] and the Christian continues to make this sign "in order to repel the attacks of the demon and put him to flight."[39] Therefore, the word segnade brings out clearly the poet's allegorization of the ark as the Church, a prophetic reference to God's complete and definitive act of salvation on the cross which gives the sign its power to save and protect. As

the description unfolds of the flood's covering all and seizing the doomed folk,[40] the poet reiterates the symbolically significant details: the flood

> . . . on sund ahof
> earce from eorðan and þa æðelo mid,
> þa segnade selfa drihten,
> scyppend usser, þa he þæt scip beleac.
>
> (1388-9)
>
> . . . lifted on the deeps, from the earth
> the ark, with the family in it, which the
> Lord Himself blessed, when he locked the ship.

In yet another repetition of the same ideas, the poet stresses the fact that halig god / ferede and nerede 'holy God carried and saved' (1396-7) the ark and ealle þa wocre . . . wið wætre beleac 'locked in all the offspring against the water' (1409).[41] The lifting of the ark by the waves, and the locking and blessing of the ship with the sign of the cross, which are the actions associated with the hand of God, serve to bring out the importance of the ark as a type of the Church[42] and the whole episode is a demonstration of the loving concern of the Creator for those who are obedient to Him.

Once the horde 'treasure' (1439), the precious lives saved through the waters, has come to rest on a high hill, attention is shifted from God's saving power to the subsequent human responses and actions. The first is the longing to get out of the ark onto dry ground, which corresponds to the longing in the hearts of the faithful in the Church to reach their resting place in the heavenly kingdom, and the lines which describe this desire (1431-5) have no equivalent

in the biblical account.[43] Similarly, the birds sent out by Noah have allegorical significance. The first bird, the raven, represents "those who refuse the way of Redemption", and the poet derives the detail of perching on fleotende hreaw 'floating corpses' (1447) from Bede's commentary which explains the significance of all four of the flights.[44] The raven does not return to Noah, preferring the carrion of this world, represented by the corpses of the wicked who died in the flood. In the very fact that he came from the ark, he is a sign that even the good who have been saved still carry within them the potential for evil, which can break out again and cause them to depart from God and from the fellowship of the faithful.

The poet's elaborations on the flights of the dove is designed to draw attention to their symbolic meaning, and the hand of Noah which appears twice in this passage has the passive role of receiving the haswe culufran 'grey dove' (1451) when she returns. His hand does not receive either the raven, which returns to sin and worldliness, or the dove after she finds land on her third expedition; its role is to hold and protect the dove while she is still a pilgrim, just as God has sheltered him and saved him in sealing the ark, an act which also was brought into focus through the hand-motif. On her first flight she is not able to find any place to rest and so returns weary and hungri to handa halgum rince 'hungry to the hand of the holy man' (1463), showing that "rest is not promised to the saints in this world".[45] The hand of Noah here symbolizes that rest and nurture are available from God for hungry and weary souls through the instrumentality of the Church. The

second time the dove goes forth, she rejoices in finding a tree to land on, and in a sensitive description of bird behaviour the poet recounts her next move:

> Heo feðera onsceoc, gewat fleogan eft
> mid lacum hire, liðend brohte
> elebeames twig an to handa,
> grene blæd .
>
> (1471-4)
>
> She ruffled her feathers, went again flying with her offering; the traveller brought one twig of an olive tree to the hand, a green leaf.

This signifies the possibility that those who were baptized outside the church can be brought into unity with the blessed if they have the "oil of charity".[46] Noah's hand receives the twig, a sign that the charity of those outside the visible boundaries of the Church is acceptable to God. The olive branch is also a token to Noah that soon he will be able to leave the ark and its passengers will dwell in a cleansed world.

The third time Noah sends the dove, she does not return at all, representing the saint who reaches "the ever-green harbour at the end of his pilgrimage", which is eternal joy in heaven.[47] As Huppé points out, the poet dwells on her joy at reaching land and on the fact that she need never return to the þellfæstenne 'prison-house' (1482), a commentary designed to call attention to the symbolic meaning of her finding land.[48] This time, since the land is now dry, instead of a bird in the hand as a sign of the state of the earth, Noah receives directly from nergend usser 'our Saviour' (1483) the word that the earth is now ready for habitation and that he may descend from the ark with all his household and possessions. As Noah, gladly obeying, arrives in

the cleansed creation, his first act is to offer sacrifice (1502) in thanksgiving to God for His righteous plan of salvation, which has just been dramatized on one level through His rescue of the righteous by means of the ark, and on another level, symbolically represented through the birds.

Following this demonstration through types and shadows of God's plan to bring mankind into the heavenly kingdom despite sin, the pattern of the ante-diluvian world is repeated. Before, when man was first created good and free, there was a blessing, a prohibition, a fall into sin, curses and a proliferation of crimes, especially murder. Here, there is a renewed creation with a holy remnant of the human race, and God, in giving the thankful Noah the same blessing and commission to multiply and fill the earth (1512-4) also gives a prohibition and warning against the same crime of murder to which human beings had set their hands before the flood. This warning is like a solemn prognostication of what is to come despite the present happiness, for in it the great plan of salvation is only foreshadowed but not fulfilled. The Lord warns man against shedding blood: the man who takes the life of another need not rejoice over his reward, for He (the Lord) swiðor micle 'very greatly' (1525) seeks out the ones who take the life of any man, thereby becoming a brother-slayer, a murderer mid mundum 'with hands' (1525-8). The hand-word, which occurs also in the Old Testament source, signals the great notoriety of this sin. Murder involves not only the power and will of man directed against a fellow human being, like the envious, death-dealing will of the first great

sinner, the fallen angel, but also it implies that man is using the strength of his hands against God in whose likeness every man was made (1528-9). The assault on God is the essence of Satan's rebellion, and is the reason that murder is singled out especially for attention. The generalized reference to the hand of man makes it clear that every man has the potential for evil within, and that we cannot expect the flood-washed state of innocence to last, for to cleanse the hearts and minds of human beings a much more powerful purgative and regenerative agent, which is the blood of Christ, is necessary.

The second Fall occurs soon after, as Noah, who has planted a vineyard, proceeds to become drunk on his blessings. This descendant of Adam commits the initial sin which leads directly to the sin of Ham, thus bringing a curse on one of his own sons, just as a curse fell upon Cain as one of the later consequences of his father Adam's sin. The diction in the description of Noah's fault echoes the story of Eden and the declension of Adam and Eve:

> Swiðe on slæpe sefa nearwode
> þæt he ne mihte on gemynd drepen
> hine handum self mid hrægle wryon
> and sceome þeccan, swa gesceapu wæron[49]
> werum and wifum siððan wuldres þegn
> ussum fæder and meder fyrene sweorde
> on læste beleac lifes eðel.
>
> (1570-6)

> His understanding shrank strongly in sleep, so that, overcome in mind, he could not cover himself with clothing with his hands, cover the shame even as the private parts were for men and women after the glorious attendant with a fiery sword shut our father and mother out of life's homeland.

Thus the spiritual history of mankind repeats itself, and by referring to the expulsion from Paradise the poet evidently intends to emphasize this point. Like Adam, then, Noah has by self-indulgence in the pleasures of this life committed mental and spiritual suicide. In both cases the blandishments of the flesh, under varying forms, have dulled the mind and put to sleep the knowledge of truth and the lively sense of the goodness and presence of God. In this instance the human hand symbolizes not so much an act of disobedience as an arrested right action; for a man of God to fail to do what he knows is right is as much a sin as stretching forth his hand to evil deeds.[50] Thus Noah's son Ham who mocks his father's nakedness commits sin and is laid under the curse of servitude, which leads his descendants into further sin just as the descendants of Cain continued in their father's footsteps of alienation from God and devotion to material possessions. The poet ignores much of the geneologies that follow the sin of Noah but concentrates on Nimrod, a descendant of Ham who becomes the first tyrant. According to Church tradition, Nimrod represents the devil as King of Babylon: he authors the building of the Tower of Babel, trying, like the rebel angel Satan, to challenge heaven itself.[51]

The building of the Tower is clearly a repetition of the worldly city built by Cain's descendants, and the episode also has strong overtones of Satan's rebellion. Like the rebel-angel's working north and west (275), the people who follow Nimrod began <u>eastan æhta lædan</u> 'from the east to lead out their possessions' (1649), a reference to Gen. 11:2 which suggests a retreat into the earthly possessiveness of

their spiritual predecessors, the sons of Cain. The east, the quarter from which rising of the sun brings light to the world, was symbolic of the true light of God.[52] Thus the descendants of Ham turn from God in this figure of travelling westward to a land whose name means "the gnashing of teeth" or "stench",[53] which are metaphors for their spiritual state. The poet describes how they then stir one another up to construct a burh 'fort, walled town' and a beacne torr 'tower as a token' (1666), concrete evidence of their pride as they, like Satan who built a throne to the north and west, act apart from God and in defiance of Him. They work in Sennera feld 'the plain of Shinar',

> oðþæt for wlence and for wonhygdum
> cyðdon cræft heora, ceastre worhton
> and to heofnum up hlædre rærdon,
> strengum stepton stænenne weall
> ofer monna gemet, mærða georna,
> hæleð mid honda.
>
> (1673-8)

> until out of pride and recklessness they
> made known their power, built a fortified town
> and reared a ladder to the heavens above,
> by strength they erected a stony wall beyond
> the measure of men with their hands, the men
> eager for glory.

Here the hands of men are busied in a sinful act; the wording emphasizes their pride in their own might, and the fact that they are reaching "beyond the measure of men", going over the proper limits set out for them by their Creator, clearly identifies their deed as evil, satanic.

By their perverseness and corruption this major section of the human race brings punishment upon itself, although not total annihilation, since God had promised that He would not again destroy all living beings by a flood. In a passage juxtaposed to the reference to men's

hands, halig god 'holy God' (1678) arrives on the scene to view the burhfæsten, and þæt beacen somed 'stronghold and the sign together' (1680) which Adames eaforan 'the sons of Adam' (1682) were building to roderum up 'up to the heavens' (1681). The tower which is the sign of their foolishness brings an appropriate punishment to these descendants of Adam who once spoke the same tongue. The poet had stressed this fact by shifting its location from its original place in the biblical account (Gen. 11:1) where it begins the chapter on Tower of Babel to a new spot between Gen. 10:19 and Gen. 10:20,[54] which connects it more explicitly with the descendants of Ham, spiritual progeny of Cain, the son of Adam who first departed from God's way. Now God, the stiðferhð cyning 'determined king' (1683), punishes their unrædes 'folly' (1682); angry in mind he reorde gesette / eorðbuendum ungelice 'differentiated the speech of earth-dwellers' (1684-5), and as a result they break up into tribes and scatter on feower wegas 'in four directions' (1697). They leave the tower unfinished, a sign that their rebellion has been thwarted and their power dissipated, and that no insurgence of man or angel can prevail against the will of the Almighty. This breaking of human pride opens the way for the final section of the poem, the call of Abraham. Many elements in this story foreshadow the salvation to come in Christ, which will mean the undoing of Satan's revenge and the full restoration of man to innocence before God and to the inheritance of the thrones which, as we have been told more than once, still stand empty in heaven.

Although approximately one third of Genesis is devoted to

Abraham and to people with whom he is involved, this portion of the poem contains the fewest references to hands. The hand of God, and the hand of man acting in obedience to Him, predominate now that the poet is concerned primarily with the life of this faithful man, over whom the hands of evil-doers cannot triumph. In the light of his crucial importance in the plan of salvation, the character Abraham has in the poem a suitably long introduction which begins by naming the mægburh Semes 'family of Shem' (1703), and immediately mentions the father of Aaron and Abraham, describing him as a þancolmod wer, þeawum[55] hydig 'prudent man, mindful of custom' (1705). By means of this reference to Shem and to the righteous nature of Abraham's father, the poet establishes that he and his family, including Aaron's son Lot, are the spiritual descendants of Seth and continue the role of the faithful angels; this shift of geneologies also clearly separates what follows from the theme of the sons of Cain and their continuing abortive revolt. The division between the God-fearing family and the worldly Caldea folc 'Chaldean people' (1730) finds a physical expression as Abraham's father removes himself and his sons from the city of Babylon:[56] snotor mid gesibbum secean wolde / Cananea land 'the wise man with his kinsmen wished to seek the land of Canaan' (1732-3). His desire for Canaan, which will be the land promised to his son, represents the longing of a pious and obedient soul for the heavenly kingdom, and his death at Haran suggests that his desire remains unfulfilled until the plan of salvation is worked out. The theme of unfulfilment in this introduction is also found in reference to the second promise which is

to be made to Abraham, that of descendants; the poet mentions that Sarra[58] 'Sarah' has not þa gyt 'as yet' brought any sons or daughters into the world (1727-8). Thus Abraham's pilgrimage has in one sense already begun, since he has the wife who is to be the mother of many nations (Gen. 17:15), and is dwelling at Haran on the way to the promised land when God calls him.

The divine summons to Abraham comes in the form of a command to leave his home and to go to an ælgrene 'all-green' (1751) land which God will show to him. This order entails many promised blessings: protection, harm to those who do him harm, blessings for those who honour him, and numerous descendants. Abraham responds by taking his goods of Egipta eðelmearce 'out of the borders of Egypt' (1768), although technically he is not in Egypt. The reference to leaving Egypt with gold and silver[59] comes from Gen. 13:1-2, which the poet has read back into Gen. 12:5 because of the spiritual meaning of Haran's position on the road leading away from Babylon. Like that city, Egypt is symbolic of sin and worldliness, but it has the connotation of bondage rather than of rebellion. Therefore, by describing Abraham's departure from Haran as leaving the borders of Egypt, the poet creates in this initial action a picture in miniature of the Exodus, which is a type of the people of God escaping from sin and beginning the journey toward the heavenly kingdom through the passover which is Christ (the initiative and call of God) and through the waters of baptism (into which man enters in response to this definitive saving act).

Upon his arrival in Canaan, Abraham receives the promise that this rume rice 'spacious kingdom' (1790) will belong to him and to his

descendants. Again Abraham responds to God's message immediately, this time by offering sacrifice, since God gives him no further specific instructions to obey. He offers a second sacrifice shortly afterward at Bethel:

> He þær wordum god
> torhtum cigde, tiber onsægde
> his liffrean, (him þæs lean ageaf
> nalles hneawlice þurh his hand metend),
> on þam gledstyde gumcystum til.
>
> (1806-10)
>
> There he with noble words invoked God, offered a sacrifice to his life-lord (to him he gave that gift, not at all in a miserly way, measuring [it] with his hand) on that excellently suitable altar.

Here Abraham's hand by the act of measuring out a generous offering represents his responsive attitude to God and his full acceptance of the divine will and guidance. Despite the fact that he has not received any of the promised blessings, he pours out an unstinting sacrifice in worship and thanksgiving. This is one of the ways in which the poet presents him as an exemplar for the faithful, to encourage imitation of his trust in God and of his continuing in obedience and hope; his example is an assurance to the readers that through doing likewise they too will receive the heavenly reward.

In the following eighty lines the poet relates how God delivers this wholehearted servant from a difficult situation in Egypt,[60] whither he went to escape a famine just as Isaac's sons must do later. In lines that echo the first departure, Abraham again leaves Egypt, where there was danger and captivity from which God delivered him and his wife. Because of his reliance on God, to whose care he committed

Sarah,[61] he has been restored to freedom with her, and they return to Bethel where again he offers sacrifice, giving thanks for lisse and ara 'joy and mercy' (1885-94). Thus through his adjustments of the biblical text and through the reference to hands, the poet emphasizes Abraham's responsiveness and trust in God, which also develops the theme of God's faithfulness and love by demonstrating that he honours this trust and is therefore worthy of obedience and praise.

Within the story of Abraham there are two major episodes involving his nephew Lot: first his capture and subsequent rescue in war; then the fall of Sodom and the deliverance of Lot from that city. Abraham is involved directly in the first of these although not in the second,[62] in which God uses other instruments to bring Lot out of the destruction. In the poem Lot functions in part as a foil for his uncle. Although he is also a man of faith and is righteous in his way of life, he makes a basic unwise choice and consequently falls into the enemy's hands twice. When Abraham offers him the choice of where he will live since they can no longer dwell together, Lot chooses the land by the Jordan because it is rich and beautiful gelic godes neorxnawang 'like God's Paradise' (1923), and with all his botlgestreon 'household treasure (1930) and wunden gold 'twisted gold' (1931) he takes up residence in Sodom. Although Lot himself remains lara gemyndig 'mindful of teaching' (1943), all the Anglo-Saxon words associated with evil occur in reference to the other inhabitants. They are arlease 'graceless' (1934), synnum þriste 'thirsting for sins' (1935), gedwolene 'perverse, heretical' (1936) and eternally busied in unræd 'folly, crime' (1937).

Further, the poet inserts the explanation that the future destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in sweartan lige 'dark flames' (1926) is because of their sins.[63] Juxtaposed to this picture of Lot surrounded by wickedness is a fifteen-line passage describing the blessedness of Abraham under God's care, living in the land of Canaan. This last detail is transposed from Gen. 13:12 to remove it from the context of the story of Lot,[64] in contrast to whom Abraham is living in complete blessedness. With the protection of the Lord a man who serves Him does not need to fear, the poet states in general terms in lines 1953-9, implying a contrast between Abraham who, dwelling in the earthly land of Canaan, is unhindered in his pilgrimage toward the heavenly land, and the nephew who chooses, rather foolishly, to live among worldly men.

The attack made by the four kings of the north, which results in the capture of Lot with all his goods, is greatly expanded and embellished with Anglo-Saxon battle poetry in order to bring out its symbolic meaning as revealed by the commentaries. The four kings from the north defeating the five kings from the south represent "the four states of sinful living", heresy, heathen folly, hypocrisy and avarice, which conquer man through his [five] senses".[65] From this it may be understood that Lot has fallen into spiritual bondage as he lives in the worldly society when he is taken in war: Hettend læddon / ut mid æhtum Abrahames mæg / of Sodoma byrig 'the enemy led out from the city of Sodom Abraham's kinsman with his possessions' (2011-3). Lot's role in this episode is basically passive, and even if the vague reference to

an earl who is not accustomed to fighting alludes to him, the main action in the passage is that of the antagonists who beat down the defenders and despoil the cities. Thus, though it is not specifically linked to their aggression, the battle description of men who handum brugdon 'drew with their hands' the hringmæled 'ring adorned', swords from their sheaths (1991-2) evokes the violent sins of the sons of Cain who lifted their hands to murder other men. Further, their action is on the spiritual level an example of the hands of the enemy destroying and making captive the good, a working-out of the will of the envious Satan.

However, the God who has faithfully promised to bring man into the heavenly inheritance does not abandon Lot, and His servant Abraham is the instrument by which an immediate rescue which is also a type of the ultimate salvation is carried out. On hearing that his nephew has fallen into þeownyd 'serfdom' (2030), Abraham experiences sorga sarost 'greatest sorrow' (2029), and appeals to his kinsmen, who, like Anglo-Saxon thanes, are þeodenholdra 'loyal to their lord')2042) and treowa sealdon 'gave their pledge' to avenge this wrong or fall in battle (2036-8). Three hundred and eighteen men band together and they attack the enemy by night. This time it is the righteous warriors who take the active role, and the signal-word occurs in the context of their ambitious enterprise. First, their leader incites them to show heardne handplegan 'hard hand-play'[66] since the Eternal Lord can easily give them success (2056-8). In the fight, their spears participate in administering the just revenge as if they too had hands:

gripon unfægre
under sceat werum scearpe garas,
and feonda feorh feollon ðicce,
þær hlihende huðe feredon
secgas and gesiððas. Sigor eft ahwearf
of norðmonna . . . .

(2063-8)

sharp spears gripped the men foully
under their cloaks, and the lives of foes
fell thickly; there warriors and comrades
laughing carried booty. Victory again
departed from the northmen . . . .

A second occurrence of this hand-related verb reveals and emphasizes the operation of God's might in the rout of the four kings and the rescue of Lot by Abraham's band as [h]im on fultum grap / heofonrices weard 'the Guardian of the Kingdom of Heaven gripped them in aid' (2072). In this way the poet emphasizes the faithfulness of God both in upholding His servant and soldier Abraham and in bringing back his nephew and all the other captives from the clutches of the foe.

This military rout has a powerful symbolic significance justifying the lengthy elaboration it receives in the best Anglo-Saxon heroic style and the several allusions to hands which pinpoint the most crucial elements. Several features make it clear that this is a dramatic type of the Redemption. Abraham is twice called se halga 'the holy man' (2039, 2057), making it clear that he is a spiritual warrior and not a pagan hero; the poet is making good use of the Christian tradition of spiritual warfare. The holy man defeats the four states of sinful living with the direct help of God, and with a band of three hundred and eighteen, a number which symbolizes the cross and the name of Jesus Christ the Saviour.[67] The poet suggests the impor-

tance of this number by concluding that no man living ever achieved a more wondrous victory with a lytle werede 'small troop' (2092-5). Another allusion to the final Redemption from sin is the statement that Abraham sealde / wig to wedde, nalles wunden gold, / for his suhtrigan 'gave battle as a security for his nephew, not at all twisted gold' (2069-71). Lot had plenty of wunden gold himself (1931), but could not use it to buy his freedom from spiritual slavery, since both his goods and himself are subject to these four evils. But Christ purchases the souls of Satan's captives "not with perishable things such as silver and gold, but with [His] precious blood . . . , like that of a lamb without blemish or spot."[68] The sacrifice of Calvary itself is conceived of as a battle from which Christ emerges victorious; this theme is developed with great power and sensitivity in The Dream of the Rood in which Christ is a geong Hæleð 'young hero', strang ond stiðmod 'strong and resolute', as he ongyrede Hine 'disrobed Himself' and mounted the cross, þa He wolde mancyn lysan 'when he wished to free mankind' (39-41).[69] Thus the highly-developed battle poetry of this section of Genesis is designed to emphasize the allusions to the Redemption and the sense of the spiritual conflict waged by the man of faith against entrapping sin.

The concluding part of the rescue of Lot episode brings out through the use of the hand-motif the central importance of God's action in this prefigurement of the Redemption. When Abraham returns triumphant, he encounters se mæra Melchisedec, / leoda bisceop 'the well-known Melchizedek, bishop of the peoples' (2102-3). The use of the

Christian term "bishop" in place of the biblical epithet sacerdos Dei altissimi (Gen. 14:18) clearly reflects the allegorical treatment of the whole passage since this also is derived from patristic exegesis.[70] Melchizedek's priesthood, which antedates the Law of Moses, was held to represent the eternal priesthood of Christ which is expressed in its fullest form in Christ Himself and is passed on in the apostolic succession to Peter and through him to other bishops.[71] Thus in a sense all of the redeemed humanity is present blessing Abraham as Melchizedek gives him godes bletsunge 'God's blessing' (2106) and proclaims to him the reality behind the events in a formal alliterative speech:

> . . . ne meahton siðwerod
> guðe spowan, ac hie god flymde,
> se ðe æt feohtan mid frumgarum
> wið ofermægnes egsan sceolde
> handum sinum, and halegu treow,
> seo þu wið rodera weard rihte healdest.
>
> (2114-9)

> . . . the travelling troop could not succeed at the battle, but God put them to flight, who protected you in the fighting with spear-warriors against the terror of overpowering might with his hands, and the holy trust which you keep with the Guardian of Heaven.

Here a character of great symbolic import makes a powerful statement about the relationship between God and Abraham. He links the action of God's hand in its redemptive work of delivering captives and overcoming enemies to the holy bond between the man of faith and his Lord, based on the promises given and the response of trust. Because of this relationship, Abraham and his little band are able to act as visible instru-

ments of the righteousness of God, and thus the hand of God takes on flesh in the people who are ready to trust Him and to carry out His will. In this way the poet's elaboration of the spare biblical narrative is intended to inspire trust in God, both because of His own holiness and through the example of this obedient man, Abraham.

In his response to Melchizedek's formal blessing, Abraham pays a tithe to the priest of God Most High, but refuses to accept any reward from the King of Sodom. The poet again places this city in the role of being representative of worldliness, and the more usual connotations of the name Sodom begin to return as the poet interjects the comment that its king wæs ara þearf 'was in need of favours' or 'mercies' (2125). Abraham clearly considers receiving a reward from this source unfitting; he tells the Sodomite leader that he does not want the woruldfeoh 'worldly wealth' (2140) nor does he wish to have anyone saying that he became wealthy through receiving treasure from Sodom. Abraham not only despises earthly recompense but he also shows his complete devotion to God[72] by giving of what he has gained in battle to Melchizedek:

> Him þa se beorn bletsunga lean
> þurh hand ageaf, and þæs hereteames
> ealles teoðan sceat Abraham sealde
> godes bisceope.
>
> (2120-2)
>
> The warrior then gave him with his hand remuneration for blessings, and a tenth part of all the plunder Abraham gave to God's bishop.

As in the earlier case of offering sacrifices to God, Abraham's hand

performs an act of worship and thanksgiving. Since Melchizedek is "God's bishop", Abraham is in effect making the offering to God, and through the Old Testament type to Christ and the Church. In this way the poet stresses Abraham's oneness with the people of God in all ages and his alliance with all who are like the faithful angels in honouring the Creator and Giver of all. The concrete sign of giving an offering with the hand in response to blessing or promise, and also the rejecting of an earthly meed, expresses the steadfast desire for the heavenly kingdom which the poet wishes to stir up in his readers and hearers.

While the first Lot episode was concerned with the rescue of captives from the clutches of worldliness and sin, emphasizing the aspect of deliverance and the pilgrimage toward the heavenly city, the second deals more directly with the other face of the coin of salvation: the judgment and punishment of the wicked. As a preamble to this doom of fire that is to fall upon the godless men of Sodom and Gomorrah, a repetition in miniature of an episode involving the capture of the righteous man Lot and his rescue from the hands of the wicked occurs with the immediacy and drama of a skirmish at close quarters. While God informs Abraham of the impending destruction, two men who are <u>englas arfæste</u> 'merciful angels' (2527) come to Sodom, where Lot is the only person who is <u>snytra gemyndig</u> 'mindful of wisdom' (2451) and who therefore shows hospitality to the strangers. The description of the coming of night emblematizes the dark intentions of the men who are <u>gode unleofe</u> 'not dear to God' (2454) as they gather before Lot's dwelling to demand that he give over the two men into their power (2455-60). In

courageous obedience to God's law, Lot steps outside to fend off his angry neighbours and even offers them his own daughters in place of "gistas mine, þa ic for gode wille / gemundbyrdan" 'my guests, whom I before God will protect' (2474-5). But the arlease cyn 'wicked tribe' (2477) will not be thus appeased. Reminding Lot of his coming to their city, a man freonda feasceaft 'destitute of friends' (2481), they ask with rhetorical scorn whether he can be their aldordema 'chief judge' (2483). There follows an intense scuffle which the poet introduces with the epic formula "then I heard . . . ", which draws attention to the incident as a matter of significance:

> Þa ic on Lothe gefrægn
> hæðne heremæcgas handum gripan,
> faum folmum.
>
> (2484-6)

> Then I heard that the heathen warriors seized
> upon Lot with their hands, with hostile palms.

The action of the hands here has no precedent in the Biblical text;[73] the poet has interpolated the basic theme of the hands of wicked men making captive the righteous in order to create a scene in which the two opposing spiritual forces clash directly. Here the satanic will seeks to entrap and destroy, and the poet emphasizes the power of this sudden attack by using two hand-words, one of which is the negative term folm.

Immediately the counter-thrust, which is an expression of the divine will, thwarts the purpose of the powers of darkness:

Him fylston wel
gystas sine, and hine of gromre þa,
cuman arfæste, clommum abrugdon
in under edoras . . . .

(2486-9)

His guests helped him well, and the upright came,
then drew him back from the fierce men with their
grips in under the dwelling . . . .

The hands of the two angels representing the righteous will of God and acting with His power deliver Lot from this brief captivity. This act springing from God's mercy toward Lot (2510) establishes that Abraham's nephew is to be saved out of the general destruction in a foreshadowing of the Redemption to come,[74] while the defeat of the men of Sodom in this final direct clash with representatives of God's grace means that the logical consequence of their rebellion will come upon them without delay. Like Noah, Lot believes the angels' word of warning that destruction is coming, and he obeys it by removing himself and his daughters from the city. His wife, however, who hyran ne wolde 'did not wish to obey' (2571) the word of God[75] becomes a sealtstanes anlicness 'likeness of a salt stone' (2566-7), standing forever as a warning to those who receive mercy but turn back from the way of obedience and thus are caught up in the judgment. As the folca friðcandel 'peace-candel of the peoples', i.e., the sun (2541) rises, the punishment of the impious city begins:

þa ic sendan gefrægn swegles aldor
swefl of heofonum and sweartne lig
werum to wite, weallende fyr,
þæs hie on ærdagum drihten tyndon
lange þrage. Him þæs lean forgeald
gasta waldend!

(2542-7)

> then I heard that the Prince of heaven sent sulphur and black flame from the sky as a punishment for men, raging fire, to those who in former days vexed the Lord for a long time. The Ruler of spirits gave them that reward.

The gefrægn formula again suggests the announcement of a significant theme: the judgment by fire.[76] The burning of Sodom and Gomorrah is a type of the eschaton, the final destruction of the world in flames which is to eradicate sin and bring about the establishment of the new heavens and new earth in which righteousness dwells (II Peter 3:13). The solar epithet "peace-candle" suggests that this event is to bring to the faithful not the terror which afflicts the damned, but joy and the true peace of Christ, the Light of the World who rises in glory as the old, sinful world passes away. By suggesting through the structure of this episode the contrast between the rewards of righteousness and obedience, and the terrible doom of burning which is the stark alternative for those who persist in unrighteousness, the poet seeks to lead his readers to make the obvious choice. The example of Lot's faithfulness and consequent deliverance should inspire complete renunciation of prideful rebellion and a holy fear of and single-hearted obedience to the Creator who is also the Judge of Mankind.

Righteousness and obedience are the path on which Abraham has chosen to walk, as he has demonstrated by his offering of sacrifice, by his victory over the symbolic force of sin, the four kings of the North, and by his rejection of gain from worldliness. To him the heofena heah-cyning 'High King of Heaven' (2166) shows Himself and makes a far-

reaching pledge:

> Ne þearft þu wiht ondrædan,
> þenden þu mine lare læstest, ac ic lifigende her
> wiþ weana gehwam wreo and scylde
> folmum minum; ne þearft þu forht wesan.
>
> (2169-72)

> You need not fear anything while you follow my teaching, but I will cover and protect [you] while you are living here with my hand against every misfortune; you need not be afraid.

Already Abraham has experienced the sheltering power of God's hand, which protected him and enabled him to conquer four armies with a small band, but he remembers another promise of which he has seen no fulfilments as yet. In his reply Abraham laments and calls himself feasceaft 'poor, destitute', (2176) because he has no son. The rest of this passage, in which the word "hand" does not occur, traces the unsuccessful effort to supply an heir through Hagar, her first expulsion, the birth of Ishmael and leads up to the covenant between God and Abraham, the assurance that the son of "Sarra" who shall be called Isaac will inherit the blessing (2327-9). The tone of this part of the poem may be characterized by the phrase sar on mode 'sorrowful in heart' (2216), as the chosen couple struggle with unbelief and with the problems they have created by trying to find their own solution. The emphasis on the problem of Sarah's barrenness and the son to be given to her suggests the importance of womankind in the plan of salvation, since the Saviour of the world is to be born of woman. Similarly, His herald, John, is to be born of an old and barren woman according to the word of the Lord given to Zechariah (Luke 1:6-25).[77] Throughout this section of

the poem, the poet stresses the faithfulness of God and forecasts in the theme of birth and fulfilment the coming into the world of the Son of God, whose birth, death and resurrection will bring mankind out of slavery and into the heavenly kingdom, and will definitively defeat the power of the devil.

After the destruction of Sodom, which occurs next in the poem and in which the purging of evil is foreshadowed, an incident involving Sarah and Abimelech brings the theme of barrenness and fulfilment back into prominence as a preparation for the birth of Isaac, which may be seen as the beginning of the climax of the poem. Like Pharoah, Abimelech takes Sarah into his house because she said she was Abraham's sister. Again, God intervenes directly to protect Abraham's wife from being defiled. In a dream He informs Abimelech that this woman's husband is privileged to see the sweglcyning 'heavenly King' and to speak with Him (2658-9), and orders the ruler of the Philistines to give Sarah back to Abraham. When Abimelech awakens he and his men experience fear of Abraham for þære dæde drihtnes handa / sweng æfter swefne 'because of that deed, the blow of the Lord's hands' (2671-2). The action of God symbolised in this expression is His causing barrenness in all the females in Abimelech's household. The Lord further instructs Abimelech in the dream to ask Abraham to pray for him so that He will favour him with children again, which does not happen until he asks, many lines later. In answer to Abraham's prayer the engla helm 'protector of angels' granted the request and tuddorsped unleoc / folccyninge freora and þeowra 'unlocked fertility of free and slaves for the king of the

people' (2752-4). Immediately following this in the poem comes the birth, naming, and circumcision of Isaac, simply stated without further preamble since the return of fertility and its connection with Abraham and his effective relationship with God in prayer is sufficient prelude. The whole episode reaffirms God's special care for the man of faith and His faithfulness in performing according to the word which He has spoken.

In a further recognition of this fact, Abimelech makes an alliance with Abraham. He observes that the Lord has been with him, giving him victory, strengthening his mind, and prospering whatever he undertakes in word or deed with friend or foe:

> Waldend scufeð
> frea on forðwegas folmum sinum
> willan þinne.
>
> (2813-5)

> The Ruler, the Lord, pushed your desire
> with his hand on its onward course.

The Philistine king can see that God has advanced the fortunes of His chosen servant. If willan þinne is read as "thy will" it also suggests that God moves and inspires Abraham himself in all his actions. Thus it is also a reminder that God who in the beginning called him forth from his native land and people is the Initiator and Mover of all progress toward salvation. Man by his own will turned away from his Maker, but this metaphor of God shoving with His hand stresses the vigour of His love and desire to bring humanity into the heavenly kingdom for which inheritance He created them. The incarnational intimations in this image are appropriate in the light of the typological

meaning of the final section of the poem, the sacrifice of Isaac: the sacrifice of the Son who became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14) brings total restoration to the wayward human race.

The ultimate test of Abraham's faith and obedience is the command to offer up his only son, through whom his physical descendants were to inherit the promised land, and his spiritual descendants the heavenly patria. The poet has previously emphasized the fact that the promised blessings are to come through Isaac in his account of the circumcision of the long-awaited heir.

> Hine Abraham on beacen sette, mid his agene hand swa him bebead metod . . . .
>
> (2768-9)
>
> Abraham with his own hand set the sign on him as God commanded him . . . .

The hand was not mentioned at the circumcision of Ishmael, the son of the slave,[79] who is now driven away with his mother. The hand-word signals the importance of this event and stresses the fact that the son of the wife Sarah will inherit the covenant and the promises on both levels of meaning. Therefore, though it must have seemed incomprehensible and arbitrary to Isaac's father, he nevertheless sets out to make a burnt offering of his only son. His obedience, and his trust in the goodness of God in the face of the unthinkable is to bring unguessed rewards to himself and to all mankind.

The passage describing the offering of Isaac is charged with emotional wrenching and prophetic significance. Words meaning "son" are repeated: þin agen bearn 'your own child' (2852), and sunu ðinne

'your son' (2853). The fact that Abraham is offering his only son is of more than sentimental importance, however, since he also prefigures God who out of love for the lost world gave up his only-begotten son (cf. John 3:16). This spiritual dimension is further emphasized through the details which follow. The son carries wudu 'wood' (2887) representing the wood of the cross which Christ is to bear, as he bears and suffers for the sins of men; the father carries fyr and sweord 'fire and sword' (2888) which are symbolic of the judgment on sin which Christ became so that man might be made righteous (II Cor. 5:21). The reference to the hands of the victim, inserted by the poet, stresses the spiritual meaning. Abraham

> gefeterode fet and honda
> bearn sinum and þa on bæl ahof
> Isaac geongne.
>
> (2903-5)

> bound the feet and hands of his child,
> and lifted onto the altar the young Isaac.

The bound hands suggest both the helplessness of man entrapped by sin and death, and the helplessness of the victim offered to God as a remedy for sins. Isaac is Christ on the cross, with both hands and feet fastened, a theme repeated in other Anglo-Saxon references to the crucifixion. In the Christ poem, the poet describes how þa hwitan honda ond þa halgan fet 'the white hands and the holy feet' (1110) were pierced through with nails.[80] Here again the words "child" and "young" stress that the love of the father for God is transcending natural bonds, in this willingness to offer his only son; they also show the pity and love toward the world on the part of the Father who did

not spare His only Son but delivered Him up to death for mankind (Rom. 8:32). The hand of man engaged in killing and the hand of God exercising judgment are both indicated as Abraham gegrap 'seized' his sword and wolde his sunu cwellan / folmum sinum 'wished to kill his son with his hand' (2906-7). The negative word folm suggests the horror of son-slaying on the human level, although Abraham's intention is good since this act would be one of total obedience to the revealed will of God. The hand of the father wielding the sword is also the judgment of God the Father on sin and rebellion, a judgment which falls upon His Son Jesus Christ. This obedience unto death[81] in substitution for men makes it possible for those who believe in Christ to become sons of God and enter into eternal life in union with Him, thus overcoming finally the envious purpose of Satan which was to bring men into death and bondage to himself and to cut them off from the joys of heaven.

The killing of Isaac does not actually take place, since God intervenes to prevent it. An angel of the Lord stops Abraham hlude stefne 'with a loud voice' (2909-10) and as he stille gebad 'waited silently' (2910), the angel commends him for his obedience and faith (expressed again in his immediate halt in mid-swing to wait for new instructions) and announces the blessings that are to be his reward:

> Mago Ebrea, þu medum scealt
> þurh þæs halgan hand, heofoncyninges,
> soðum sigorleanum selfa onfon,
> ginfæstum gifum. Þe wile gasta weard
> lissum gyldan þæt þe wæs leofre his
> sibb and hyldo þonne þin sylfes bearn.
>
> (2917-22)

> Kinsman of Heber, you shall obtain for yourself compensation, true victory-reward, ample gift through the hand of the Holy One, of the King of Heaven. The Guardian of Spirits will graciously reward you for [the fact] that his friendship and favour were dearer to you than your own child.

The hand of God here represents His power to give. He is the source of all things, of immediate blessings, of the natural human life which He here spares, and of the eternal life which is the true reward of those who through faith, obedience and surpassing love for God, are victorious over the selfish human wilfulness and desires. The mention of rewards is thus an allusion to Christian readings of the event as a type of the Redemption, which the obedience of Abraham has brought to this prefigurement of fulfilment.[82] The author of Hebrews connects the saving of Isaac with the Resurrection: Abraham "considered that God was able to raise men even from the dead; hence, figuratively speaking, he did receive him [Isaac] back" (Heb. 11:19, R.S.V.). The resurrection of the body is also the final triumph over Satan. It is the glorious climax for which all Christians wait with faith like that of Abraham, who obeyed the voice of his Creator and journeyed toward the heavenly kingdom in which redeemed man will live in peace with God and enjoy the thrones left empty by the rebellious angelic host. In the last lines of the poem, after Abraham offers the ram,[83] he

> and elra þara sæl∂a gifena drihten, sægde leana þanc þe him sið and ær forgifen hæfde.
>
> (2934-6)

> gave thanks for rewards and for all the blessings which the Lord of gifts had always given to him.

This response returns the glory to God for all that He has poured out upon him. In this sacrifice of thanksgiving the poet offers his own thanks for the great blessing of the Redemption and leads his audience into worship and acknowledgement of the wondrous love and goodness of God.

As we have seen from this examination of Genesis, the use of the hand motif bites right into the meat of the poem: the theme of choosing. In the beginning, God Himself creates the alternatives either of living in joyful fellowship with and submission to Himself (which is life) or of breaking the relationship with the Creator and Source of life and setting up rival standards (which is death). The importance of not selecting the latter is brought out clearly by the first appearance of the signal-word in the poem. The hand of God crushes the insurgent angels who had upset the peace and unity of heaven, a gesture that finalizes the result of rebellion against God, which is to cease to dwell with Him. And as this event makes evident, the choice is a matter of life and death. Then, intertwined with the drama of choosing obedience or disobedience in the account of the Fall, is the image of the hand of God in its most basic function of creating and sustaining life. This image serves as a reminder during the debacle of which choice would have been the better one. Even after the disobedience of man, God's goodness and His love for His creatures continues to be manifested through the actions of His hands. They overcome and destroy those who follow the path of Satan, and they shelter, strengthen and give blessings to the faithful and righteous among the human race

who long for the union with God which the loyal angels enjoy. These categories of hand action which we saw unfolded in the Psalms function in the Genesis poem as channels communicating the perfect holiness and life-giving power of the Creator. He forms a bright contrast to the envious Satan, from whom originate pride, deception, disobedience, darkness, bondage, violence and death. To symbolize his role as the antithesis of Life, Satan's hands are bound, incapable of real action, while the hands of those men whom he gains as his servants carry out his will by committing murders or attempting to capture and enslave good men. It is between these two, diametrically-opposed, that every man moste on ceosan 'must choose' (464-5) one as his lord.

The hands of men performing disobedient deeds enact one of these possibilities for the human will and incur the consequences thereof. The evil begins for mankind as Eve takes the fruit of the tree of death in her hand, eats of it, and offers it to Adam. The existence of this choice is also found in the Psalms, wherein it is suggested that a good man could stretch forth his hand to wickedness. Hands that have ceased to do God's will then proceed to act along two major lines of operation: turning away from God's kingdom to build another apart from Him, and expressing hatred for their Creator by killing or enslaving those of His creatures who remain pilgrims in search of the heavenly city. The followers of Nimrod in the plain of Shinar attempt with their handiwork, the Tower of Babel, to echo the pride of the angels who set up rival thrones in heaven, and like the tribe of Cain who founded the first worldly society they build without

reference to God. All this human vain-glory, however, is brought to an ignominious end. Cain's murder of Abel, and Lamech's of Cain, bring curse, exile and finally destruction in the Flood for Cain's whole froward tribe. The theme of curse following sin recurs after the Flood in Genesis, and is found also in Beowulf, particularly in the monster Grendel who treads the paths of exile and continues to repeat the sin of Cain, murder, in his nightly depredations. A similar type of evil act, which is to seize the innocent and hold him as a captive or slave, likewise brings the judgment of God upon the transgressors. Defeat for the four kings from the north, fire for the inhospitable inhabitants of Sodom, and death for Grendel's mother are consequences of their defiance of God expressed in their hatred for man.

The acts of good men's hands are concrete representations of the other potentiality for the human will, which is obedience to God. Sometimes these actions involve violence. Two examples of this principle are the highly-symbolic battle in which the hand-play of Abraham's band frees the righteous Lot by slaughtering the northmen, and Beowulf's battles with the monster and his mother which liberate the Danes from the horror of nocturnal attacks. Here the consequences are peace and freedom for Lot and for the Danes in Heorot, at least temporarily. The major type of action of good human beings is direct worship: hands are lifted in praise of the Creator in the Psalms; and the hand of Abraham offers sacrifices in Genesis. His generous offerings are practical signs of his faith, love for God, and obedience, the choice that leads to life. The most important of these is Abraham's

sacrifice of his son Isaac, which he as a father is commanded to carry out. Abraham binds Isaac and lifts the sword, prepared to obey even such a costly, wrenching command. He is stopped at this point, since this gesture of his hand has been the signal of his willingness to obey. The hands of the righteous victim appear in Genesis in the bound hands and feet of his son. This links Isaac with Christ, whose hands and feet are fastened to the cross and also, curiously enough, with Satan, whose hands and feet are bound in hell. However, the latter is bound for all eternity through his own wilful rejection, while the son of Abraham and the Son of God suffer for a short time the consequence of sin so that they may live again and so that all may again be able to choose the alternative of life with the Father. Thus although there is sometimes a superficial resemblance between the positions or actions of the hands of wicked and righteous men, their fundamental purpose and the direction in which their wills are turned are entirely opposite. The hands of proud rebels like Satan, Cain, and Grendel, and of all haters of God's image in man, which build up the worldly society, commit murders, and seize innocent victims are the hands of those who reject God and separate themselves from His kingdom; they are the hands of those who choose death. But the hands doing battle for God or offering worship to Him or held prisoner for His sake, in Genesis as in the Psalms are the hands of those who seek the heavenly kingdom and the thrones abandoned by the disobedient angels; they are the hands of those who choose Life.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

1. In his account of Ishmael's birth and the prophecy made to Hagar, the poet omits a mention of hands. Where Genesis 6:12 states that Ishmael's hand would be against every man (manus ejus contra omnes), the corresponding lines in the poem (2290 ff) describe his future style of life without using the signal-word. The Latin expression denotes the attitude causing hostile behaviour rather than the specific acts. The O.E. poet carefully notes this state of mind which is part of the fallen humanity's strife against God. Symbolically he is the "son of the bondwoman" who cannot inherit the blessings of the "son of the free woman". The Epistle to the Galatians allegorizes Ishmael as those belonging to the old covenant: Ishmael is unredeemed humanity, "born according to the flesh" and under the curse because it is impossible for the natural man to obey the Law (Gal. 3:10-11). Sarah and her son, on the other hand, represent the New Covenant. She is the "Jerusalem above", the mother of the faithful (Gal. 4:22-31) who are heirs of the promised land, the heavenly kingdom.

2. Bernard F. Huppé, Doctrine and Poetry (New York, 1959), p.200.

3. In Genesis 13:14-18, God repeats in more detail the promises of Gen. 12:1-2 that He would give to Abraham (still called Abram in the Old Testament at this point) all the land that he could see as well as innumerable descendants, uncountable as the dust of the earth.

4. George Philip Krapp, ed., The Junius Manuscript (New York, 1969), p.87. All references to the Genesis poem will be from this edition and will be identified in the text by line numbers in parentheses.

5. Huppé, p.192-3. See also Note 64 below.

6. Ibid., p.166.

7. Thomas H. Ohlgren, "The Illustrations of the Cædmonian Genesis: Literary Criticism Through Art", Medievalia et Humanistica 3 (1972), p.208.

8. In his Ph.D. Thesis (New Aspects of the Monsters in Beowulf (Ann Arbor, 1968), pp.229-38) Nicolas Karl Kiessling describes the beliefs and practices of Germanic warfare, and the relationship between warriors and animals seems relevant to this odd, unbiblical statement in Genesis. Kiessling relates the use of figures of monsters and wild animals as protective (apotropaic) devices to the belief that "malevolent and terrifying animals also represent a kind of extension or

visualization of the warrior's own prowess" (p.230). The bear, boar and wolf are the most common animals having this metamorphic significance; they are credited with transforming the warrior into the likeness of a monster, thus making him more fierce and terrifying in battle. The idea goes back to the earliest records: Kiessling refers to Plutarch's description of warriors who wore the heads and skins of animals pulled on over their skulls as a form of helmet, which gave them a very alarming appearance and seemed to increase their fierceness.

The Old Norse word for such a fighter was berserkr. Its components ber 'bear' and serkr 'shirt' allude to the practice of warriors covering themselves with bearskins or the hides of other powerful beasts. So attired, the warrior would condition himself so that he would become wild, raging, uncontrollable and even almost insane. An early mediaeval writer describes such a person warming up for battle by going into a kind of tantrum; he would howl or bark to assume the spirit of the animal (237). In the Grettis Saga Kiessling finds an example of a "berserk" working himself into a frenzy by howling and biting the edge of his shield. An extension of this is "shape-shifting": the spirit of a man goes into an animal, or the man actually becomes an animal, usually a bear or wolf. Admired heroes of literature practised some variation of this: Sigmund roams about as a wolf; Bothvarr Bjarki (analogous to Beowulf) seems to be sleeping in the castle while a huge, invincible bear fights alongside King Hrolf and disappears the moment someone waken Bjarki. In the light of the concept of heroism, it is not surprising that some residue of it is found in the Anglo-Saxon Christian poet who describes God as just such an enraged warrior in an unusual image of divine wrath. As Huppé points out, however, in citing another passage dealing with the rout of the rebellious angels from Christ and Satan (199-200), the emphasis is always on the might of God (Doctrine and Poetry, pp.228-9).

9. The verb scieppan 'to create' is used in connection with naming:

> Sceop þa bam naman
> lifes brytta. Leoht wæs ærest
> þurh drihtnes word dæg genemned,
> wlitebeorhte gesceaft.
>
> (128-31)
>
> The Distributor of life then created both names.
> Light first through the word of the Lord was
> named day, the beautiful creation.

Likewise in line 140 He sceop nihte naman 'created the name night' for the darkness. The same power in words is suggested by a parallel construction in Beowulf when Hrothgar scop him Heort naman

'created for himself (or 'for it', his hall) the name Heorot' (78).

10. II Tim. 4:3. Paul continues "For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving; for then it is consecrated by the word of God and by prayer" (II Tim 4:4-5).

11. Rom. 8:20-21. St. Paul discusses the redemption as applying not only to mankind but also to everything else in the world:

> For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God: for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved.
>
> (Rom. 8:19-24)

12. The word andweorc (176) in the Genesis A creation story means matter or material (according to Clark Hall) and refers to the rib taken from Adam; of þam worhte god / freolice fæmnan 'from it God wrought the beautiful woman' (183-4). The verb worhte and the implied "physical" presence of the brego engla 'prince of angels' who pulls the bone out of the sleeping body (181-2) echoes the tone of the second chapter of Genesis despite the fact that it has been placed in the context of creation by fiat. Therefore it is possible that andweorc which is a rare word is a scribal error for handweorc (a variant spelling of handgeweorc). Although one could argue that logically speaking the extracted bone is not yet "handiwork", the use of the word may be a poetic projection of its future completion onto the present situation, or else an anticipation of the Genesis B usage. In this case, Eve's being called God's handiwork prior to the beginning of Genesis B would introduce the implication of the human hand and its freedom to act. This would be appropriate in the light of the fact that Eve is the first to forget the love of God and to abuse the freedom given to humanity.

13. I Timothy 6:10, Radix enim omnium malorum est cupiditas 'The root of even all evil is the love of having" was always a favourite text for preaching against possessiveness. Exegetes traced this sin right back to Genesis, where Cain represented this earthly love since he worked in the earth while Abel who was a (shepherd) herdsman produced spiritual sustenance. This was one reason offered as to why God

received Abel's offering of a lamb but rejected Cain's "fruit of the ground". Huppé sees in the poet's phrasing of the statement about their respective occupations an allusion to this interpretation: in lines 972-4, Cain's works are related to earth but the other assisted his father, that is, analogically, God (Doctrine and Poetry, pp.156-7). This the first murder has roots in a love for creation which supplants love for the Creator. Even the name "Cain" was understood to mean 'possession' - possession of the goods of this world for their own sake . . . " (ibid., p.155).

14. Stiff-necked is an adjective applied frequently in the Old Testament to the stubborn and rebellious people of Israel when despite all the blessings and deliverances they received they continued to distrust and disobey their God (e.g. Deut. 9:6, 13 and 10:16).

15. This is an idiom which, if translated literally, yields another sidelight on Satan's personality: "for us two, for Adam, it must happen ill . . .". The word for "us two", as well as referring to Adam and Satan, could indicate God and Satan, revealing the muddied thinking of the adversary who still equates himself with God although he knows and has admitted that he has lost the war.

16. cf. John 8:46. "Which of you convicts me of sin?" are the words with which Jesus challenges the proud teachers of the law who attempted to trap him in arguments in the Temple.

17. Gif is repeated again in line 427 as Satan urges his followers to attempt to come up with a plan. It is interesting that Satan is using for his own benefit the same system of drihten and giongor to which he refuses to submit himself. C. S. Lewis' perceptive comments on Milton's Satan are applicable here. Because of his pride, Satan's own prestige is so important to him that he does not see the contradiction in his refusal to accept any superior, although his own high position must depend on (in his own words) "Superiority in kind, or Divine appointment, or both . . . . He wants hierarchy and does not want hierarchy". (A Preface to Paradise Lost [New York, 1961], p.96). The satanic pride insists on being at the top of whatever hierarchy exists.

18. Adam in this part of the poem is called selfsceafte 'not born, without parents' (523). Bosworth-Toller translates 'self-shaping' or 'spontaneous generation', a more literal rendering. The word cannot have this literal meaning, however, since both we and Adam know that he was made by God. This word suggests two significant ideas: Adam, as the first-created man (not born of woman) has the freest choice; and because of his freedom of choice he in a sense will shape his own destiny (and that of the human race) in choosing whether to live in the light of God's commandment or to go his own way and fall under the dominion of Satan and of death. Adam's disobedience will mean that all his descendants are under the power

of sin (until delivered from it by the sacrifice of Christ) as the poet makes clear: Bið þam men full wa / þe hine ne warnað þonne he his geweald hafað. R. K. Gordon translates: "Many a time shall the man have great sorrow that he did not refrain when he had the power" (Anglo-Saxon Poetry, p.107); once mankind has sinned, the complete freedom of Adam is lost through the fatal power of sin and the blindness due to Satan's deceptions.

19. This is a New Testament theme. In Romans 5:12-19, for example, Paul outlines salvation history by comparing and contrasting the roles of Adam and Christ.

20. John F. Vickrey, "The Vision of Eve in Genesis B", Speculum 44 (1969), p.100.

21. John F. Vickrey discusses in his article "The Vision of Eve in Genesis B (pp.88-102), the implications of the tempter's offering of a vision and what Eve thinks she sees. She describes it as the place where He sits, in the south east with angels flying about it on wings. The details correspond to the standard features of Last Judgment passages such as the one in Christ III, in which lines 927-8 mention the angels flying about the throne. Since sin leads to judgment it is ironically appropriate for the poet to allude to the Last Day, although Eve herself does not realize what the sight means and expresses only delight and exhilaration (Vickrey, p.95). Vickrey sees further irony in the fact that while she is looking at the Judgment, Eve is talking of avoiding judgment in order to persuade Adam to disobey the commandment of God (p.90). The tempter offers the vision of the throne probably because it was the symbol of power and "would appeal to her vainglory"; it was also a throne which Satan lost and Adam stands to gain (p.87). The vision is evidently demonic and corporeal (p.97) and any informed contemporaneous reader would know that such visions are not to be trusted, yet Eve asks rhetorically who could have given this if not God Himself (671-2). The mention of her holdne hyge 'loyal mind' (708) increases the irony and pathos. Perhaps we are not to take this any more seriously than the holdne hyge of Satan's follower (586).

Eve is wilfully credulous through vanity. Vickrey points out that the Christian audience of the poem would be more aware of the irony in her imagining that she sees God in the diabolically-inspired vision that is the reward of disobeying God, while the true way to God is through total obedience (p.97, cf. Matt. 5:8, Heb. 12:14). Despite the emphasis on her co-operation with evil the poet "defends" Eve by saying that she acts with a loyal mind, or 'faithful intent' (R. K. Gordon, p.108), not knowing that so many sufferings would follow for humanity. She thought that she was gaining the favour of the King of Heaven and doing His will, but because of wifes wac geþoht 'the woman's weak thought' (649) she was deceived. In these statements the poet shows pity for the deceived woman although he has

also shown what sins she committed in allowing the wyrmes geþeaht 'worm's' or 'dragon's thinking' to well up in her mind, such as pride in desiring greater powers for herself than she was given. The "intention to exonerate" attributed to the Genesis B poet may be merely an attempt to achieve plausibility of motivation, to show how Adam and Eve came to do what they did, inexcusable still because they knew the truth about God. The ancient problem of the incomprehensibility of free will, apparently in contradiction to the Sovereignty of a Loving God causes the poet to exclaim that it is a micel wundor 'great wonder' that the eternal God would suffer this to happen, þæt wurde þegn swa monig / forlædd be þam lygenum þe for þam larum com 'that so many men would be led astray by lies, who came for teaching' (595-8). In his pity for the sufferings of mankind the poet himself may have lost sight of the principle expressed in the first temptation of Adam: that knowing the truth and standing firm in God's word it is possible to defeat the liar Satan and man is responsible for himself since he has this free will.

22. Revelation to John 22:8-9. The angel who instructs John says that he must not bow down to him, who is but "a fellow servant with you and your brethren the prophets . . . . Worship God."

23. Eve of course means 'true, correct', but wærum can also mean 'cautious, wary', which the words of the tempter actually were. This play on word meaning helps to underscore her easy credulity and is an ironic touch as the woman blandly repeats the clever lies as if they were truth.

24. The lines 701-3 are grammatically ambiguous. R. K. Gordon translates: "the handiwork of God [Eve] was a help to him [the devil] in beguiling them to hateful crime" (Anglo-Saxon Poetry, p.108). However, wifa wlitegost . . . wæs him on helpe handweorc godes / to forlæranne could also be read as "the most beautiful of women was a help to him in leading astray God's handiwork". This would make handweorc godes a reference to Adam instead of to Eve. This alternative translation shifts the emphasis from the perversion of God's creature into an instrument of the devil to the fact that the demon (through Eve) is assaulting the man who is God's own creation. Both versions, however, establish the basic contrast between the creating power of God and the envious, destructive will of Satan.

25. Milton's Eve, thinking out the implications of her disobedience, decides that if she is to die, Adam must die with her. C. S. Lewis comments: "I am not sure that critics always notice the precise sin which Eve is now committing, yet there is no mystery about it. It's name in English is Murder" (A Preface to Paradise Lost, p.125). Although the O.E. poet does not explore Eve's motives as Milton does, we can see that Eve commits murder in a symbolic manner.

26. See Chapter 2, p.76. Beowulf has several analogous lines, suggestive of ritualistic expression of grief.

27. Note that the poet has used folm, the more negative and anti-human hand-word in the first two references to this murder. See also 1.983, quoted above in the text.

28. Oliver F. Emerson cites the later mediaeval Cursor Mundi in his article "Legends of Cain, Especially in Old and Middle English", PMLA XXI, (1906), pp.856, 859 as one source for such a legend. This may be a development of the idea that God hears the blood of Abel calling from the ground (Gen. 4:10) so that it becomes a story in which an anthropomorphic deity can perceive the body because it has not remained hidden. The illustration in the Genesis poem (The Cædmon Manuscript, p.49) shows the upper torso of a figure with its arms lifted. This is Abel who, half-buried in the ground, is looking up to Christ (the deity with a cruciform nimbus) whose right hand is raised in the sign of blessing (see Appendix A, "The Hand Coming Down from the Clouds"); His figure is powerfully expressive of pity. Gollancz describes this half-figure as a representation of "the voice of Abel's blood crying to the Lord" (p. xlii), possibly because the figure has its arms raised as though alive in a gesture of supplication but its mouth is closed. Such illustrations can be both an impetus to and a reflection of the type of legend mentioned in line 1010.

29. This time "hand" occurs also in the Old Testament, in Gen. 4:11.

30. cf. Huppé, p.156. See also Note 13, above.

31. See Appendix A, "The Harp-playing Fingers of Jubal".

32. Huppé interprets this poet's frequent "books tell us" as an indication that he is alluding to the Church Fathers (Doctrine and Poetry, p.153).

33. Ibid., p.161. If the number symbolism is worked out fully, there is also a hint of the future Redemption in the seventy-seven-fold punishment for the avenger of Lamech. In addition to indicating the consequence for his sin, this was understood as prophetic since Christ appeared in the seventy-seventh generation to take away the sins in which men had to live until that time (p.162).

34. Ibid., p.165.

35. St. Augustine, The City of God. Translated by Gerald G. Walsh, S.J., from The Fathers of the Church Vol.14 (New York, 1952), pp.468-71. The Bible does not say "the sons of Seth" but filii Dei 'sons of God' (Gen. 6:2), which the Fathers took to mean the descendants of

Seth. These are "the citizens of the other City on pilgrimage in this world, who fell in love with the physical beauty of the women who belonged to the worldly society of the earthly city and who had been living in corruption from the beginning" (Ibid., p.468). This is an allegory of how the sons of God (Seth's line) fall in love with worldliness and slip down into union with worldly society, losing the holiness that is maintained in the holy society (Ibid., p.469).

36. Huppé, p.169.

37. The illustration on p.66 of The Cædmon Manuscript shows Christ (nergend usser) with the cruciform nimbus, a visual allusion to the cross found even in illustrations of Old Testament themes, probably to emphasize prophetic references to the salvation to come. In this drawing He is preparing to shut the door of the ark, but first he "blessed the ark within"; for this the Saviour is depicted with the right hand raised with the first two fingers extended, a traditional sign of blessing.

38. Daniélou, The Bible and the Liturgy, p.57.

39. Ibid., p.60.

40. See Appendix B.

41. The poet mentions all the other creatures which are saved along with the faithful human beings. This is a reference to the fact that salvation that is for all of creation. See #11.

42. The term hof seleste 'best of buildings' (1393) could also be translated 'best of temples or sanctuaries', an appropriate term to apply to the symbol of the Church.

43. Huppé, p.174.

44. Ibid., p.175. Gen. 8:7 says only that the raven flew back and forth and offers no explanation for its failure to return to the ship.

45. Ibid. Huppé is citing Bede as the source of these ideas.

46. Ibid. The Old English lends itself easily to this reading, since the word elebeam 'olive tree' means literally "oil tree". The symbolism and use of oil in the Christian church is explained by Daniélou who cites St. Cyril of Jerusalem on the custom of annointing with oil at baptism:

> . . . you were annointed with oil that had been exorcised, from the top of your head to your feet, and you were made

> partakers in the true olive tree which is Jesus Christ. Cut off from the wild olive tree and grafted on the cultivated tree [this is evidently based on Rom. 11:17 ff], you have been given a share in the richness of the true oil. For the exorcized oil is a symbol of participation in the richness of Christ. It causes every trace of the enemy's power to vanish"
>
> (The Bible and the Liturgy, p.40)

It is, therefore, easy to see a connection between being grafted into Christ, and having the love of Christ, which is a major theme in the New Testament (cf. I Cor. 13).

47. Huppé, p.175. See Appendix B, note 4, for further commentary on the meaning of green (1480).

48. Ibid., p.176.

49. See Appendix A: The Sceome of the Fall. It seemed logical to translate this line as I have, especially in the light of the illustration, and also of tradition which makes nakedness a metaphor for sin (cf. Rev. 3:17-18). Sweet's dictionary gives the meanings of the noun gesceap as follows: "creation; created thing, creature; form, shape; nature; destiny, decree (of fate); private part". John R. Clark Hall's list is similar, but includes the words "sex" and "genitalia". It was precisely this that Noah did not cover and which is associated with shame after the Fall, when Adam and Eve become aware and embarrassed about nakedness and make aprons of leaves for themselves. Huppé either does not notice this or avoids the issue by saying "shame, says the poet, has become fitting to man" (Doctrine and Poetry, p.176), following the lead of such authorities as Bosworth-Toller, which includes Genesis 1573 in a list under the meaning "decrees", on the analogy of another statement which obviously means "decrees" from its context.

50. James 4:17. The failure to do good is a sin because it involves disobedience to the leading of God's Spirit, and it amounts to a denial of the relationship that a person claims to have with God.

51. Huppé, pp.178-80. Huppé develops this theme in detail, enlarging on why the poet omits certain details and expands others, for example, his omission of "Nimrod's famous role as a hunter" (p.179). He does this in order to enlarge on Nimrod's role as king of Babylon, whose drive for earthly glory sets him in the city of this world as opposed to the city of God.

52. Huppé, p.185.

53. Ibid., p.184. Huppé quotes a passage from Bede's commentary in which the exegete says 'What by the land of Sennar is meant but the stinking lust of carnal folly?' The phrase "gnashing of teeth" recalls the anguish of the damned who realize too late what it means to be shut out of heaven (cf. Lake 13:28, Matt. 13:42).

54. Gen. 10:20 is a summary of the generation of Ham following the list which carried the line as far as Nimrod who leads the people in this rebellion against God. The statement about the speech being the same is 1.1635 of the poem, and is separated from the brief reference to Shem's descendants (11.1640-8).

55. To say that a man is mindful of customs is high praise in the Anglo-Saxon way of thinking. See Chapter 2, pp.55,58; Bwf 11.350-9.

56. In 1.1707 the poet established that this was their birthplace. The city is traditionally the symbol of error and worldly society (cf. Huppé, p.187).

58. The poet does not distinguish between Sarai and Sarah, and also ignores the difference between the names Abram and Abraham. In Genesis, God changes the name of Abram 'exalted father' to Abraham 'father of a multitude' (R.S.V., Gen. 17:5 and notes), and also Sarai to Sarah (Gen. 17:15), when He makes the covenant with him after the birth of Ismael. Because the poet does not concern himself with the names and their meaning, I have followed him in referring to Abram and Abraham throughout, and also will use the name Sarah throughout, although the poet occasionally uses the spelling Sarai (for example, incorrectly, in 1.2761).

59. Gold and silver is not mentioned in Gen. 12:5. The two facts, leaving Egypt and possessing gold and silver, are mentioned together in 13:1-2, and also in the book of Exodus. Chapter 12 of Exodus which describes the passover and the sacrifice of the lamb in detail and ends with the departure of the people from Egypt (v.51) also mentions gold and silver. Verses 35 and 36 describe how the slave Israelites borrowed gold and silver from their masters and absconded with it. Gold and silver also represent spiritual worth or riches (cf. I Cor. 3:12). In the correct sequence of events, the poet repeats Gen. 13:1-2 but without naming gold and silver, only begas 'rings' (1875), stressing instead that Abraham is bringing his wife safely out of Egypt.

60. This incident involves Abraham's instructing Sarah to say that she is his sister so that he will not be killed. The poet adds to this (apparently) somewhat cowardly ruse a passage in which Abraham verbalizes his hope and expectation that God will grant protection, an idea derived from commentaries. In the poem Abraham also implies that it was God who inspired him to do this, who "shaped this path"

for them (1841-2). When the Pharoah takes Sarah, he experiences God's anger, just as his later successor did when he continued to hold the people of Israel captive. Sarah may be understood to represent the Church, sterile until "fulfilled in age through the son of promise" (Huppe, p.188), and thus the whole incident is another repetition of the descent into slavery and deliverance through God's intervention.

61. Huppé, p.189.

62. A passage of about two hundred lines which falls between the two Lot episodes will be discussed later, since it deals with Abraham and the promised heir which is the prime concern of the last section of the poem. The two episodes involving Lot will therefore be dealt with together, since they are related in subject and involve an interesting interplay of forces represented in the hands of men and angels.

63. Genesis 13:10 refers to the land as well-watered, and to the destruction of the cities but without mentioning that it takes place because of the sins of the inhabitants.

64. Huppé mentions this fact as an example of the poet's "detailed concern for narrative order" because he introduces this statement "only after completing his account of Lot, with its added commentary" (p.191). However, he does not develop the idea any further. He also observes that the poet has changed Genesis 13:14-18 from a reiteration of the promises (land and descendants) into passage of commentary designed to bring out the significance of these promises as references to the Redemption: the promised seed is Christ, and the land is the heavenly kingdom (p.192). Therefore it follows that the full wona bearn (1951) of the original manuscript most probably means "sons of baptism" (Huppé) or "sons of the baptized" (Grein), although Krapp adopts Holthausen's foldwonga bearn even while admitting that "it is doubtful if foldwonga really arrives at the original intention of the poet" (The Junius Manuscript, p.185). Thus the seed of Abraham in the sense of all of the faithful are represented in the poem here, giving praise to God (his, 1.1949, I take to refer to cyning engla, the subject of the previous clause), the response which the poet wishes to inspire in his audience by presenting the story of salvation and Abraham's part in it.

65. Huppé, p.197. The poet continually repeats the idea of north and south, (such as in lines 1995-9) which are significant directions in terms of Christian symbolism (see above, p.124). The men of the north come in part from Shinar (1964), already associated with the pride of the Babel-builders, and the fallen angel himself worked northward and westward. The poet also calls them freora feorhbanan 'slayers of free men' (2088), an epithet reminiscent of one used to

describe Satan — the soul-slayer. In contrast, and despite the fact that he had described the people of Sodom and Gomorrah as sinful and unwise only fifty lines before, the poet now writes of them as simply the innocent victims of attack; the plundering of their gold and the carrying off of their wives and widows is avenged by the trained servants of Abraham (2075-80). This peculiar reversal in the characterization of the people in these two cities lasts only as long as this particular episode, and can only be explained in the light of a spiritual interpretation of the episode which the poet must have in mind. In the later section of the poem where they appear, the Sodomware play their usual role of the embodiment of evil.

66. This stock phrase occurs as heard plega in line 1989, even though the line in which it occurs alliterates with "h". It would therefore have been even more effective if the poet had used the full word handplega with its connotation of human action as an extra signal of the importance of the battle in which Lot was captured. However, the extra syllable would have made the line unbalanced metrically.

67. Huppé, p.197.

68. I Peter 1:18-19. The Redemption is referred to frequently as a purchase; for example, Paul reminds the believers in Acts 20:28 that Christ has purchased them with His own blood.

69. W. F. Bolton, An Old English Anthology, pp.97-8. Anglo-Saxon battle preparation involves the arming of the hero, but in this poem the hero does the opposite, since the miclan gewinne 'great struggle' (65) is a spiritual, not a physical, encounter. This principle is also operating when Beowulf abandons all weapons in order to do battle with the member of the tribe of Cain called Grendel, who is analogous in this role to the men of the north in the present battle. Their spiritual family tree, as we have seen, also reaches back to Cain, and beyond to the fallen angel who inspires all such activity against God and whom Christ defeats in the battle on the cross.

70. Various Church Fathers, building on St. Paul's explanation of Melchizedek as a type of Christ in Hebrews 7, have seen in this figure an enacted prophecy of Christ in His priestly function of offering the sacrifice which takes away sin, symbolized in the panem et vinum (Gen. 18:19), the lacum 'offering' (2103) which is mentioned in the poem. The bread and wine have always been connected with the elements of the Eucharist in which the invisible reality of Christ, the Bread of Life (John 6:35) is made present (Daniélou, p.143). However, the poet does not name the bread and wine and perhaps does not intend to stress this aspect of the prophetic significance of the "priest of the Most High God", which suggests too much the fulfilment of the promises and the coming of Christ's kingdom when the wicked "Northmen" have been driven back, while the poet is trying to portray

Abraham as still a soldier of God and a pilgrim on his way toward the heavenly city.

71. Huppé, p.198.

72. Ibid., p.199.

73. The Latin of Gen. 19:9 reads, Vimque faciebant Lot vehementissimi jamque prope erat ut effringerent fores. The verb facio has a multitude of meanings; it implies action and the adverb suggests very violent action, but the word "hand" does not appear, nor does the verse suggest the grabbing or clutching which the Anglo-Saxon poet describes. The Authorized version gives the translation, "And they pressed sore upon the man, even Lot, and came near to break the door", which implies that their main object is to break into the house and get at the strangers, and that Lot is merely one more obstacle to them. The O.E. poet does not even mention the door, and thus shifts the evil purpose of the Sodomites from the guests to Lot himself. In verse 10, however, the Latin does mention that the hands of the two men snatch Lot back into his house.

74. Huppé, p.202.

75. This is itself an interpretation of her action; Gen. 19:26 merely states that she looked back. The action is interpreted in a spiritual sense as a desire for sin and a turning back from following Christ, a meaning suggested by Jesus in the saying "Remember Lot's wife" (Luke 17:32). The patristic commentaries take up and elaborate on this idea at great length. (cf. Huppé, pp.203-4).

76. See Appendix B, "Hands of Flood and Flame".

77. See p.85, above. Huppé discusses this and a parallel construction in the Christ poem as allusions to the Immaculate Conception (Doctrine and Poetry, p.201).

78. See note #60.

79. See note #1.

80. The Exeter Book, p.34. See also l.1455 of the same poem. Genesis 22:9 says simply that Abraham "bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar, upon the wood". The mention of hands and feet is derived from tradition about the manner of crucifixion, with which the sacrifice of Isaac was so intimately linked by Christian exegetes.

81. Philippians 2:8. It is seldom remarked upon that Isaac himself was obedient and co-operated with his father.

82. In Genesis 22:16-18, God repeats the promises in an emphatic manner: "I will indeed bless you" and adds to the multiplying of descendants the statement possidebit semen tuum portas inimicorum suorum (Vulgate, Gen. XXI:17). The "seed" is normally interpreted to mean Christ and thus God promises as in Gen. 3:15 that the One will come who will overcome Satan, possessing the gates of His enemies. The Anglo-Saxon poet does not mention this specific detail but instead uses language which evokes the redemption in terms of rewards. Thus this forceful reiteration of the promises may be read as implying their fulfilment.

83. Note that this prefigures the Passover. The poet inserts a reference to Abraham pouring out an offering of the rommes blode 'ram's blood' (2933) which is not mentioned in Gen. 22:13. In the Passover a lamb (always a male) was sacrificed and its blood placed on the door as a sign that the home of the Hebrew was protected from the angel of death. The meal of the pasch, in which every Jew had to take part, was a sacrament in advance of the sacrifice of the Lamb of God whose blood covers sins and delivers man from death.

APPENDIX A: GRAPHIC GESTURES

Hands in the Illustrations of the Cædmon and Paris Psalter Manuscripts.

In his article "The Illustrations of the Cædmonian Genesis: Literary Criticism Through Art", Medievalia et Humanistica 3 (1972), Thomas H. Ohlgren outlines the establishment of basic archetypes which mediaeval artists copied from other manuscripts. These were all easily recognizable representations of familiar biblical figures, and were repeated without change, except in the case of a deviation from the content of the Vulgate through poetic rearrangements and amplifications (p.201). These cases are the most interesting, and the best example is the artist's attempt to accommodate the Genesis poet's treatment of the fall story, beginning with Adam. But before launching into the value of illustrations in studying the meaning of the text, Ohlgren mentions the problems and possible pitfalls in this approach to literature. Art buffs must temper enthusiasm with common sense and not draw sweeping conclusions about a work of literature from its illustrations, nor indulge in rhapsodic descriptions of it based on the technical jargon and values of their discipline. One hindrance to the study of the manuscript illustration's relation to the text is the lack of information; since the author is unknown one cannot investigate his other works or his background, but only make educated guesses. Another is the fact

that the illustrations may belong to a later period than the text itself, as is the case with the O.E. Genesis. Because of this difference between two periods, one cannot assume a common background of ideas for artist and writer (p.202). Exercising due caution, however, the author goes on to show how the illustrations are related to the text, and, in places, how the same story had a different interpretation in the later period, reflected in the artist's work. The sidelights gained from this kind of study help the reader to see the individual poem in the broad current of tradition upon which it floats.

Hands of Supplication

Both Genesis and the Paris Psalter contain illustrations in which the artist has captured in gestures the state of mind of the human characters in the text. Like the tiny sketches on the first pages of The Paris Psalter, drawings in The Cædmon Manuscript show figures with their hands raised in prayer. The earliest representations of Adam and Eve (pp.9, 10, 11) have the eyes and both hands lifted in an attitude which strongly suggests loving, worshipful obedience. In the temptation scenes the indecisive hands reflect the confusion of Eve; in the drawing on p.20, she is looking over her shoulder at the serpent in the tree on the left while her hands are held toward the right, as if she has just been distracted or, as Gollancz suggests, as if she is being tempted and is trying to restrain her hands from touching the tree (p. xli). This indecision becomes acceptance in a later picture as Eve takes the fruit daintily between fingers and thumb (p.24). After Adam's fall, when the messenger is becoming like a devil again, the man

is depicted on p.31 raising his hands towards heaven in a gesture of supplication. Eve, on the other hand, is crouching on the ground between her spouse and the Tempter revealed as a devil, with her hands in a very interesting position. The right has the fingers curled in the anguish-shame manner (see below), but the left, which is more noticeable, is drawn with the inordinately-long thumb against the chin and the forefinger against her forehead and right eye (the head is slightly turned as if she is looking back like Lot's wife). Her hand resembles nothing so much as a pair of dividers, perhaps symbolic of her divided loyalties and wacran hyge. Similarly, her posture represents her closeness to the earth on the spiritual plane, as tradition understood the role of woman in the Fall. Adam, unlike Eve, has completely turned his back on the devil and is kneeling with both hands lifted, fingers straight and pointing heavenward; this suggests the return of his heart to God in repentance and his eagerness to obtain forgiveness. The posture of the body helps to identify the meaning of the hand gesture. In the case of Enoch ascending with hands and eyes raised (p.6), it signifies his holiness and obedience, the reward for which was to be taken up into heaven. On p.11, where the not-yet-fallen couple have their hands lifted, they stand relaxed and peaceful in the garden; Gollancz suggests that this is "an attitude of thanks" for the gifts God has given (p. xli). In most cases of lifted hands, the fingers are drawn carefully parallel and straight, pointing upward as if to God, in acknowledgment of His will and way.

The Sceome of the Fall

In the Cædmon Manuscript illustration on p.34, Adam and Eve are smitten by their realization of their sin and their nakedness. Each has one hand lifted to the face, with the fingers curled and separated, highly suggestive of agitation. With the arm and fingers bent in this way we get the impression that they are looking inward upon themselves and seeing with horror the consequences of their sin and the separation from God, to whom they cannot look. The other hand of each is covering the genital area, and in the picture immediately beneath, holding leaves for the same purpose. These gestures, combined so expressively here, together illustrate the concept of sceome 'shame', which becomes important again in the story of Noah's drunkenness. In the drawing connected with this episode, in which the poet uses the word "shame" and alludes to the Fall, the artist has quite pointedly emphasized the genital organs and the hands: one hand is lying inert while the other feebly and absent-mindedly clutches the blanket which Noah has forgotten in his stupor to draw up and cover himself. In this way through his illustrations, especially in the positioning of the hands, the artist helps to bring out the meaning of an event and show in visible terms its relationship to another incident in the poem.

The Harp-Playing Fingers of Jubal

Another illustration in this manuscript on page 54 brings out the interpretation of a biblical text based on patristic tradition although the poet's treatment of this passage could suggest an alternative reading (as discussed in Chapter 3, p.113). This is the drawing

of Jubal (Iabal in the O.E. text), a descendant of Cain who is "the father of all such as handle harp and organ" (Gen. 4:21). He is shown staring dreamily off into space as he plucks the strings of a harp. The fingers and thumb are enormously long and exaggerated, and the whole pose suggests the worldly self-indulgence that was considered characteristic of Cain's tribe. Ohlgren in another article[1] shows that another sketch of Jubal with his harp was begun on page 55, and then abandoned because it would have interrupted the sequence, since "the artist had devised a more economical arrangement for the remaining members of Cain's geneology on page 54".[2] He then goes on to explain how the contrast between the holy Seth and the fratricide Cain is important in the poem as the basis for the artist's arrangement of the geneological drawings:

> The two geneologies were intended to be juxtaposed because the story of Seth and his progeny is the necessary thematic antithesis to the genera_tion of Cain. The poet, in lines 1104 to 1106, stresses the exegetical idea that Seth is the blessed replacement for Abel, and with him is restored the holy seed. Jubal, by contrast, represents those who enjoy earthly possessions for their own sake."[3]

Thus both the arrangement of the illustrations and the manner of drawing the hand in them gives credence to the traditional interpretation that was current in the artist's period, if not before.

Ohlgren's work is based largely on Huppé's famous Doctrine and Poetry, to which he refers frequently. Huppé explains the Augustinian doctrine that the saints are "guests and pilgrims" and "Christian people on earth founded no city; for supernal is the city of the just", citing Bede, and goes on to say that "Cain's progeny, including as it

does Jubal and Tubal, the founders of the refinements of civilization (1087-1089), symbolizes the earthlings".[4] However, as explained in Chapter 3, the positive flavour of the passage of the poem concerning Jubal raises doubts in some minds about the validity of the Augustinian reading. Nevertheless, the Christian poet may have been fully aware here also of the distinction Huppé sees in his work between the city of Cain and the city of God; the word herbuendra, instead of suggesting sympathy, may instead be signalling the fact that he is still talking about the worldly race of Cain. As Huppé points out, "the Christian theory of poetry was clear and definite; it was subscribed to by all Christians".[5] Described in detail in his first chapter, this theory could be summer up in the saying "all human learning and eloquence should serve the ends of Scripture".[6]

The Hand Coming Down from the Clouds

Because the hand of God is mentioned so often in O.E. poetry, it is not surprising to find Him represented in manuscript illustrations by a hand descending from above. Four of the thirteen tiny sketches in the Paris Psalter show this hand complete with the sleeve of a robe, coming through clouds at the upper edge of an illustration. In only one of these cases does the verse being illustrated mention a hand, and none refers to God's hand. One of these is placed below Psalm 3:4 which reads: Tu autem domine susceptor meus es gloria mea et exaltans caput meam. In this sketch, "the hand of God emerging from the clouds supports the head of a kneeling man".[7] The artist has represented very literally the phrase "my Glory and the Lifter of my Head" (R.S.V., Ps

3:3), or, to put it another way, he has sacramentalized the spiritual by representing the grace of God in concrete physical terms. The little kneeling man has his hands raised, and God's hand is holding his head up; although physiologically the pose is awkward and the poor man's neck is bent double, the gesture is very expressive of the caring and refreshing love that the supplicant receives from God.

The next illustration is similar and accompanies a verse telling how the Lord has helped the psalmist in the past and appealing for the same answer to prayer. Psalm 4:2 reads: Cum invocarem te exaudisti me deus iustitie me in tribulatione dilatasti me; and the Introduction describes the drawing as the hand of God emerging from the clouds toward a praying man.[8] This time the man is standing, looking up and holding out his arms, with the hands open palm upward in a gesture expressing need. God's hand is pointing downward through the clouds with the fingers arranged in the traditional sign of blessing: the thumb, and index and middle fingers extended straight, while the third and fourth fingers are curled against the palm. This sign is used also in the Junius manuscript illustrations, such as the one on page 49 of The Cædmon Manuscript, in which the hand making this sign descends from a cloud in the upper right corner toward Abel who is offering a ram; this signifies divine acceptance of his sacrifice, as opposed to the rejection of the one offered by Cain, who stands over to the left. The artist illustrating Psalm 4:2 has in the same way represented divine favour, the acceptance of and response to the prayer offered by the man in the sketch.

In the eighth drawing of the Paris Psalter, "the psalmist stands before the hand of God issuing from a cloud and holding a pair of dividers".[9] This represents God's justice and refusal to countenance evil: Mane adstabo tibi et videbo quoniam non volens deus iniquitatem tu es (Ps 5:5). The man in this picture stands with his hands lifted to shoulder level in a kind of shrug, suggesting both awe at God's righteous judgment and also the innocence which allows him to praise God for this attribute. The final example from the Psalter mentions the hand of man in the Latin text: Domine deus meus si feci istud,si est iniquitas in manibus meis (Ps 7:4). The psalmist is asking God to test him and to "let the enemy . . . tread down [his] life" (A.V., Ps 7:5) if he has committed a certain sin. All the hands here have straight fingers. The man's hands point upward as if offering them for inspection; God's fingers point downward in an open gesture of acceptance of the psalmist's innocence. These drawings show how many different ideas can be conveyed through the different positions of hands in manuscript illustrations, and how they are intended to enrich the text and instruct the reader through interpretation which may go beyond what the verse actually says. In these examples, the hand of God is inserted to show what His response will be to the prayers, based on the Christian understanding of the nature of God. In this way the illustrators as well as the translators of the psalms share in the purpose of the Genesis poet whose intention is to inspire his readers to worship God by depicting His loving and righteous actions through representing the spiritual in concrete terms, also using the hand of God as a sign of His action.

NOTES TO APPENDIX A

1. Thomas H. Ohlgren, "Five New Drawings in the MS Junius II: Their Iconography and Thematic Significance", Speculum 47 (1972), 227-33.

2. Ibid., p.230. All of this, of course, is conjecture on the part of Ohlgren, although it seems applicable and is a reasonable possibility to explain the drawings referred to, which are metalpoint sketches visible only through special photographic techniques. The sketch on page 55 consists of an unmistakable harp shape with the arm at the same angle as the completed and inked-in drawing on the previous page of the manuscript.

3. Ibid., pp.230-1.

4. Huppé, Doctrine and Poetry, p.161).

5. Ibid., p.239.

6. Ibid., p.34. It is also my personal experience in writing poetry that a Christian may feel very strongly the beauty of this world and the pull of its attractions and describe them with sympathetic insight and feeling, and yet still be able by the grace of God to make the renunciation required and to express this also sincerely and effectively both in writing about it and in living in the world. Therefore the tone of language alone cannot be trusted as a guide to the poet's basic commitment to and understanding of what he is writing. The Genesis poem is unambiguously Christian in its overall purpose and content, and the language of heroic poetry is subordinated to the aim of inspiring praise to God, unlike Beowulf which is not so explicitly Christian although it contains elements derived from this faith.

7. Prof. Francis Wormald, "The Decoration" in The Paris Psalter, edited by Bertram Colgrave, from the series Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile, Vol. VIII (Copenhagen, 1958), p.14. I have quoted Wormald's descriptions because of their accuracy and conciseness.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

APPENDIX B

Hands of Flood and Flame

The elements have tremendous power which in Anglo-Saxon poetry is an instrument of God's judgment, and therefore it is interesting to see the hint of the hand-motif occurring here also. The Genesis poem describes the Flood in terms that could be interpreted as an allusion to hands, since one of the verbs describing the action of gripping occurs in it: Mere swiðe grap / on fæge folc 'the sea strongly gripped on the doomed folk' [Gen.1382-3]. This phrase grap on appears in other places in direct connection with the word hand; for example, in line 61 of the same poem, God grap on wraðe / faum folmum 'seized the foe with hostile hands'. This also is a description of divine justice falling upon rebellious subjects in the form of a murderous hug: him on fæðm gebræc 'he crushed them in his embrace' [Gen.62]. In Exodus, the flood is the wælfæðmum 'slaughterous embrace' (481)[1] which rushes upon the enemy troops þurh Moyses hand 'through the hand of Moses' (480). In this instance God's judgment operates specifically through the hand of a man, and the embrace of the waters suggests the image of the Beowulfian bear-hug by which God destroyed the rebellious angels[2] to whom the army of Pharoah corresponds. The Exodus poet also uses these terms to describe the judgment by water:

Witrod gefeol
heah of heofonum handweorc godes,
famigbosma flodwearde sloh,
unhleowan wæg, alde mece,
þæt ðy deaðdrepe drihte swæfon,
synfullra sweot.

(492-7)

The rod of punishment fell, high from heaven, the handiwork of God; the sea-wall of foamy-bosomed ones struck, the unsheltering wave, the ancient sword, that by a death-stroke the army slept in death, the swarm of sinful ones died.

The flood is called God's handiwork: the Creator-Judge makes with His hands (an image, surely, of direct involvement) the things which are disasters for those who wiðˇ god wunnon 'struggled against God' [Exodus, 515]. This phrase is used as an epithet for Grendel, Satan, and other notorious evildoers such as the gigantas of the race of Cain who also struggled against God [Beowulf, 113]. To be at war with God is to stand in the place of Satan and to deserve the exile of death. The "ancient sword" is a standard symbol of the Judgment. The words fær 'sudden disaster, fear, panic' [Exodus, 453] and flodegsa 'flood-terror' [Exodus, 447] suggest the emotional state of the evildoers on the Day that will come like a thief in the night.[3] In the Psalms, the Judgment means the deserved destruction of the wicked which is part and parcel of the salvation of the oppressed faithful and innocent. Both these flood episodes in Genesis and Exodus and the passages in the psalms which mention destruction by water are allusions to the spiritual dimension of salvation from the hateful waters and sea-currents of this life.

Spiritual and eschatological implications work together in this poetry of salvation. The Genesis poet works in a recollection of the Flood in the episode of the destruction of Sodom by fire. This holocaust is a type of the final Judgment; although the Deluge was not to be repeated, the earth has been stored up for fire (II Pet.3:7;12). The expression suggesting clutching hands (grap . . . on) is used of the weallende fyr 'welling flames' (Genesis, 2544) which like the flood forswealh eall geador 'swallowed all together' [Genesis 2559]:[4] Grap heahþrea / on hæðencynn 'the great distress seized upon the heathen race' [Genesis, 2547-8]. The action of the Sodom episode begins with this curious line:

> Lagustreamas wreah
> þrym mid þystro þisses lifes
> sæs and sidland.
>
> (Genesis, 2451-3)
>
> Power covered with darkness the sea-streams
> of this life, seas and wide land.

The double reference to water in this sentence is both a symbol of this life and a hinted reminiscence of the flood. The covering with darkness suggests both the unmitigated evil of the inhabitants and, by combining the two ideas, the covering of the earth with water in the Deluge, which came upon the human race before because of their wickedness. Immediately afterward, the stage being set, comon Sodomware 'the inhabitants of Sodom came' (2453), and then begins the drama of evil assaulting good, with the punishment of the one and the rescue of the other. Having tried to seize God's messengers with fell purpose, wearð eal here sona / burhwarena blind 'at once all the army of the

city-dwellers became blind' (2492-3). This is symbolic of the spiritual blindness of those who are hostile to God, a second darkness, and the fire (and flood-image) represents the only lean 'reward' (2546) they gain from it.

NOTES TO APPENDIX B

1. Krapp, The Junuis Manuscript, p.104. All references to Exodus are from this edition and will be identified in the text.

2. See above, Chapter 3, p.90, and the related footnote, #8.

3. Mt.25: 13,43.

4. "Lig eall fornam / þæt he grenes fond goldburgum in" 'the flame took away all that it found of green in the gold-city' (Genesis, 2550-1). The noun lig may be masculine or neuter, and it is difficult not to read he as "he", the personal pronoun. This personifies the fire with the image of a conqueror plundering the conquered goldburgum and carrying off not gold (material riches) but everything grene, that is, green, alive. Huppe points out that the use of colour in Genesis is symbolic in the creation account which mentions græs ungrene 'ungreen grass' (117). Greenness "symbolizes the earth given being through the vivifying Spirit; its lack of greenness symbolizes its spiritual formlessness . . ." in the beginning of creation before the Spirit has given life [Doctrine and Poetry, p.144] and now at the Judgment the greenness of spiritual life is taken from the disobedient. The fire personified thus symbolizes Death and Hell which receive the souls of the wicked as prisoners. He is also an angel or servant of God carrying out the sentence of judgment upon the evildoers.

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